

THE LOST CHIMES



GUSTAV MELBY

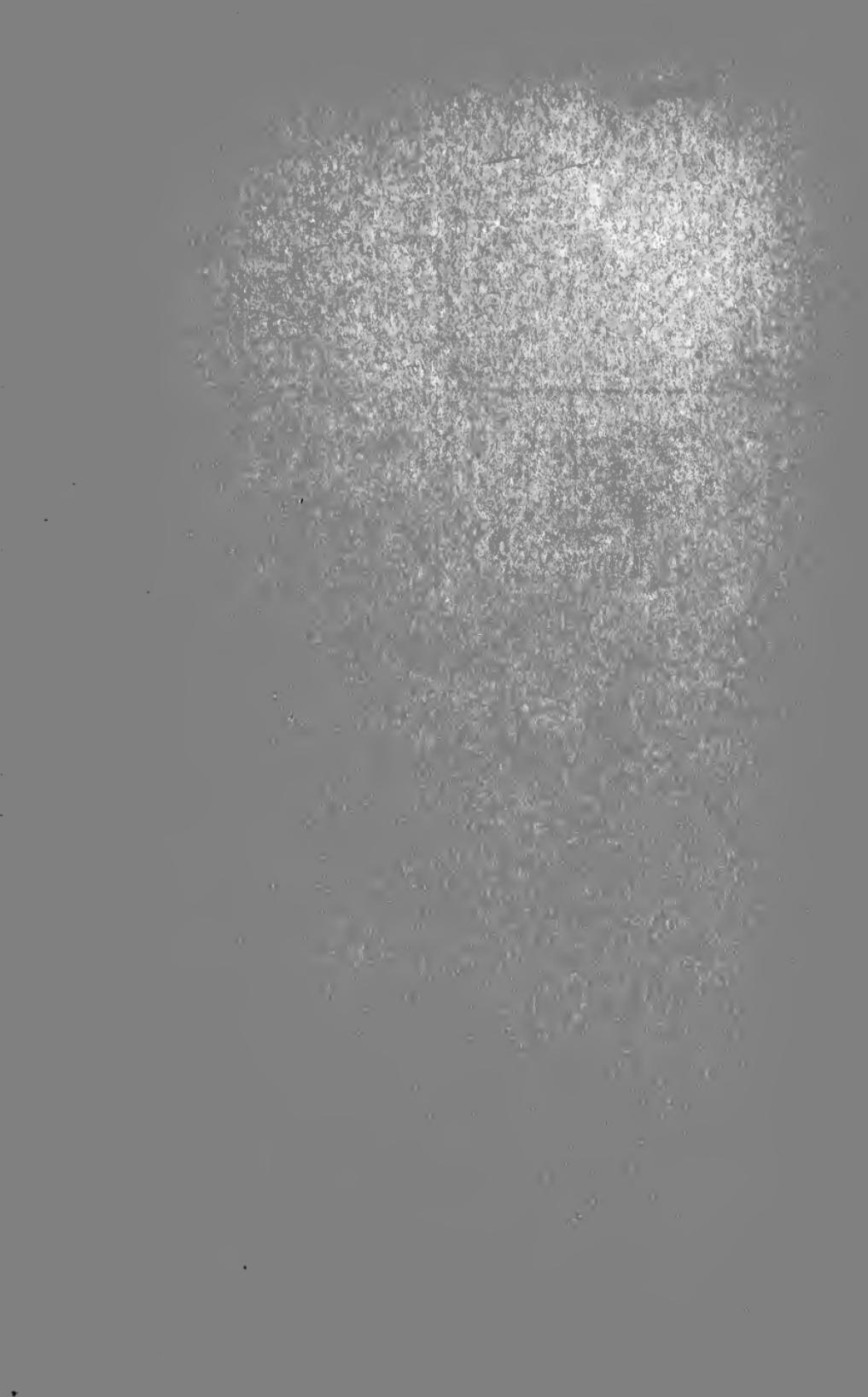
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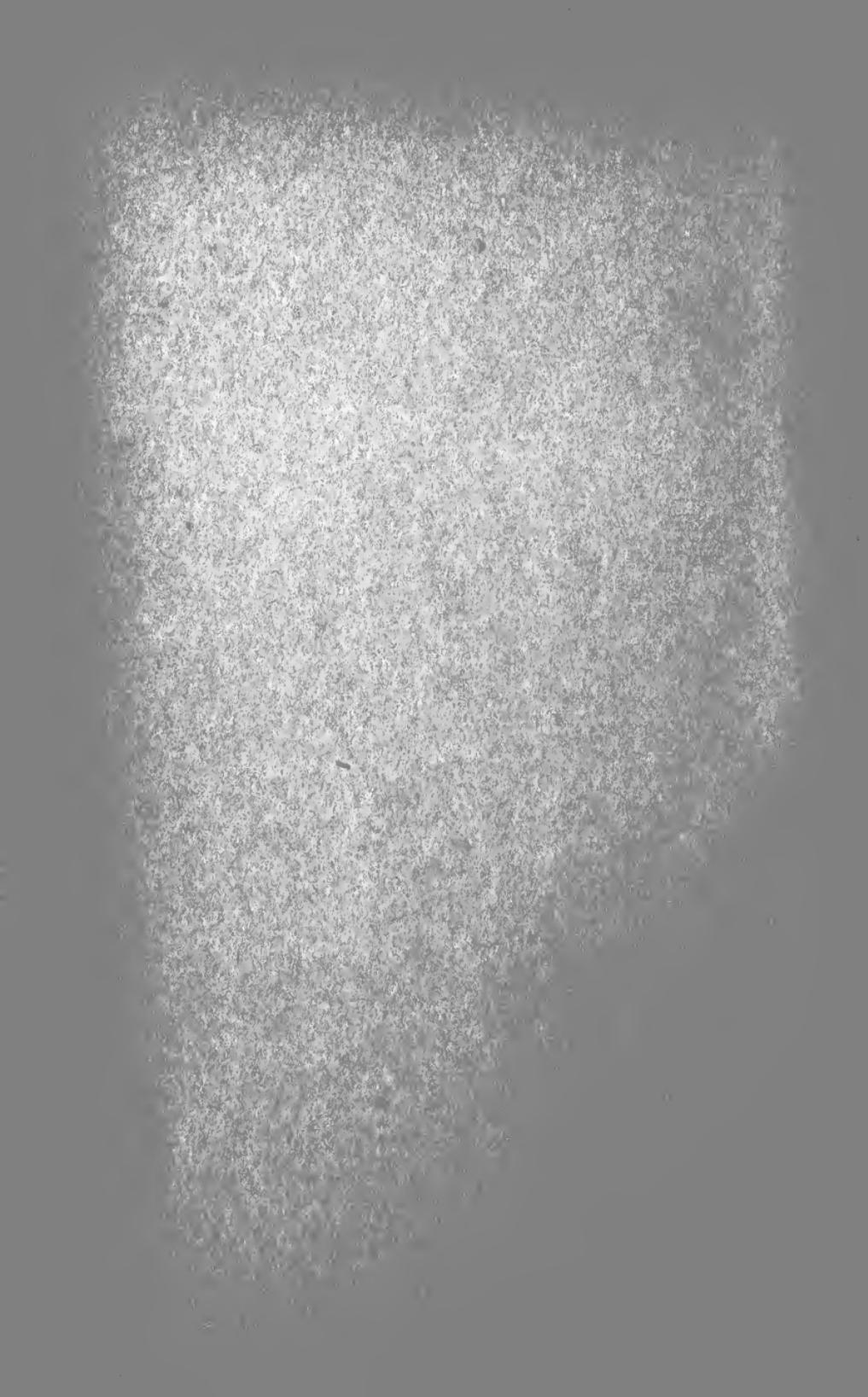
THE GIFT OF Mrs. F. J. Cressy

August 11 1919



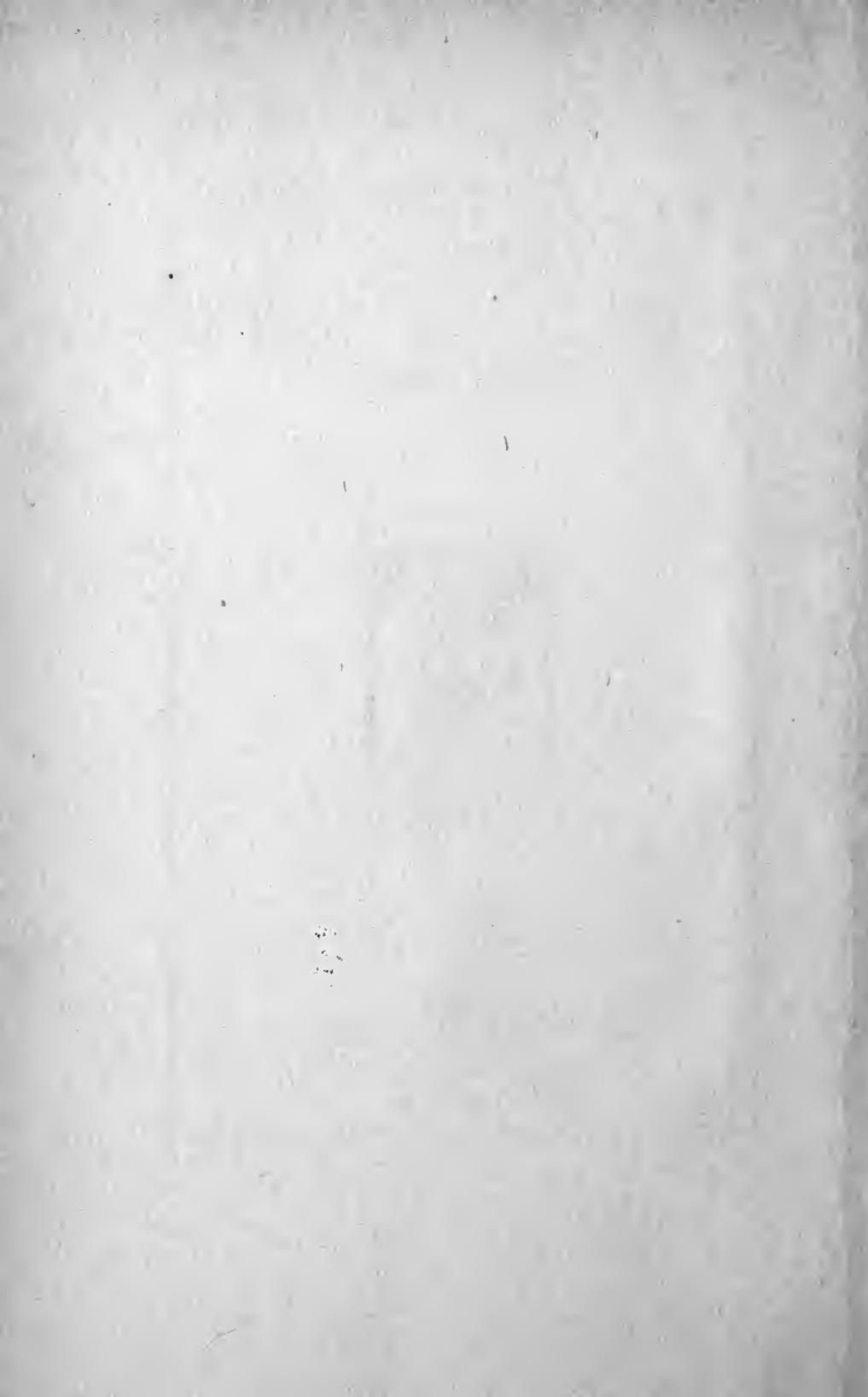
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THE LOST CHIMES

And Other Poems

GUSTAV MELBY



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To the Memory of My Friend

DR. FRANK J. CRESSY

*Whose Skill as a Physician Saved My
Child's Life, and Whose Kindness as
a Friend Lent Inspiration to Life's
Pursuits*

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THE LOST CHIMES

THE LOST CHIMES

"Count not the cost, a thousand more or less
Is not the question, but a perfect tone,
A clang as clear as the Italian sky,
As strong and joyful as the victor's cry,
As deep and mellow as the ocean's moan,
And tender as a mother's fond caress."

"And let there be no stint of pure alloy,
Of bronze and silver, no, not even of gold,
Yea, let this be thy very master-piece,
In all its making,—if it doth me please,
Half of my fortune shall to thee be told,
And to its praise my life I shall employ."

Thus spake Sordino, noble Florentine,
To one who was renowned for casting bells,
Who now was asked to make a set of chimes,
A task he had accomplished many times,
But this, he thought, the highest skill compels,
And yet the work he promised to begin.

But first for thoughts and dreams he leisure found,
For consecration to the work at hand,
Since this the glory of his life should be,
A grand creation, a sweet symphony
Of human life, which all might understand,
Their souls re-echoed in the liquid sound.

II

He was a man of many changing moods,
Impetuous, like mighty Angelo,

And kindly, like the saintly Raphael,
His patience, like Palissy's, nought could quell,
In worship, like the good Angelico,
And yet the "fickled Fame" his name excludes.

He nature loved, and wandered oft alone
Mid deep recesses of some shady wood,
And listened to the many varied sounds,
From notes of birds to noise of baying hounds,
And oftentimes as if enraptured stood,
Held by the music of the undertone.

Once had he loved a maiden, in whose eyes
He read the happiness of human life,
And mystery of the immortal soul,
A love to which he gave himself and all,
With but one aim, to win her as his wife,
And realize his dream of Paradise.

But death did also mark her for his own,
With hectic flushes on the pallid cheek,
And growing languor in the sprightly limbs;
And as the day before night's darkness dims,
So did her youthful buoyancy grow weak,
And like a vision fair, she soon was gone.

And sorrow, with its wintry blast did chill
His manly nature to the very core,
And many months he spent in utter woe;
But, like the flow'r which grows beneath the snow,
A life which he had never known before
Rose from submission to the Higher Will.

These elements did pass into his work,
His love and grief, his dreams and changing moods,
And all he was seemed mingle in the mold
Of molten metal, and was subtly told
By silver tongué'd bells in solitudes
Of monastery, or of country kirk.

III

As one who summons all the latent pow'r
Within his soul, for one last great attempt
To reach an aim of lifelong beckoning,
Thus did he give himself to this one thing,
Began his task in spotless white, and kempt,
Emerging from the sacramental hour.

He days and nights upon his labor fixed,
Forgetful both of hunger and of sleep,—
His soul reflected in the fiery glow;
And some did say, he let his life-blood flow,
And others, that he sometimes stopped to weep,
And with his blood and tears the metal mixed.

And when at last the chimes were cast, there came
A great collapse of utter weariness
Upon him, and he slept for many days;
The finishing, with all artistic ways,
Was patience's work, more like a fond caress
Of something born of inspiration's flame.

The day of testing came, the final test;
Sordino coming early in the morn,
Since eager was his soul to know for sooth,
If its ideal of the highest truth—

Of harmony—incarnate can be born,
And with the works of man itself invest.

And when two skilful hands intoned a hymn,
And gave the chimes a chance for utterance,—
As shining on a scaffold high they hung,—
It seemed to him, it was by angels sung,
So pure, so sweet, it did his soul entrance,
And with the tears of joy his eyes make dim.

The task was done, a work of perfect art;
And handsome was the price Sordino paid,
A fortune to the maker of those bells,
Of whom, henceforth, tradition nothing tells,
We know not where his future course was laid,
Nor when or where from life he did depart.

IV

The chimes found their exalted place within
A high cathedral tow'r, Sordino's gift
To a beloved fane of Italy,
And that their melodies might always be
Within his hearing, he his home did shift
From country silence to the city's din.

Where, like some voices from an unseen realm
Their music did announce each fleeting hour
To all the throngs which moved in streets below,
And as their harmonies upon the air did flow,
They seemed to have a superhuman pow'r
O'er listening hearts, yea, even to overwhelm

The meditative mind with such a joy
Of loveliness and beauty, that a tear
Would glisten in the upward look of pray'r;
And they would lift the heavy loads of care
From souls oppressed, and banish carking fear,
And grief and black remorse which life destroy.

And thus they day and night gripped human souls
With hope and cheer mid life's divers pursuits;
But on the Sabbath and the sacred days,
When man is called to think of better ways,
They seemed so jubilant with heavenly truths,
That none did doubt that God His children calls.

They had a gladness which at sundry times
Was almost riotous, like children's play,
And seemed to send out peals of laughter sweet,
When they a merry bridal train did greet,
As to the church it gaily made its way,
Transported with the rapture of the chimes.

But when the dead were carried to their rest,
Its dirges were of all most wonderful,
A depth of sadness—such as none can tell—
A sadness which the gayest did compel
To see a shadow of the ghastly skull,
And yet to feel that even the grave is blest.

V

In all these cadences Sordino found
A true delight, but most in solemn dirge,
For melancholy was his common mood,
Though sometimes he was in an altitude

Of such hilarity, that it did verge
Upon the wildness of a mind unsound.

Indeed, the whisper passed, he was insane,
Since only one with shattered reason could
Half of his fortune spend for such a thing:
To hear a set of golden churchbells ring,
And none of his few friends quite understood
His pleasure in a funeral refrain.

He loved to walk 'mongst tombs and ancient graves,
And read the epitaphs on crumbling stones,
Or muse beside some gloomy cypress tree,
While list'ning to a mournful melody,
Mark how the harmony of all the tones
Did vanish far away o'er sunlit waves.

He was a seeker after harmony,
Such harmony in which all life shall blend,
In perfect peace and concord, this he heard
Expressed in those deep tones which moved and
stirred
His brooding mind, and seemed an answer lend
To all its questions of life's destiny.

Unhappiness had marred his early life;
His marriage to a girl who loved him not,
And yet who lived within his childless home,
For binding was the tie once made by Rome,
Until at last her ways became a blot,
And by her sins she ceased to be his wife.

Since then he lived a recluse more or less,
Except when boon-companions with him met,

To dine, or rather to a revelry,
When wine and music set his spirit free,
When he life's disappointments could forget,
And when some transient bliss he did caress.

But feasts, of such a nature, yearly grew
Less frequent, for his real self was good,
And governed him, as he in age advanced ;
And now the chimes his being so entranced,
That all the hunger of his heart found food
In their sweet intonations, ever new.

They fed his innate philosophic bent,
And made him delve into the subtlest lore
Of Metaphysics and Theology,
That he through these, perchance, might clearer see
The truth which echoed from another shore,
Each time their sovereign voice the silence rent.

And he waxed confident, the human cry
Is wafted somewhere to a higher sphere,
Where it is answered with a perfect peace,—
That not a soul from earth does find release,
Release from darkness and the night of fear,
Without a morn of better hope on high.

VI

The grave has, after all, the truest peace ;
The graveyard is the greatest moralist ;
And it was wisdom that in days of eld,
The living with the dead communion held,
For they did worship in their very midst,
A custom which in our good times must cease.

No longer can we lay our dead within
The shadow of the church, but far away,
In some secluded spot where seldom seen
Is their last resting-place, beneath the green,
Where some good farmer makes his loads of hay,
And murmurs that it is in places thin.

We do not, in this shallow age, endure
To think of death, such thoughts do not amuse,
But mock the things which we are striving after;
It tickles not our vein of silly laughter,
The subject is unpleasant and obtruse,
Of which the preachers even are not sure.

The graveyard, ne'ertheless, is preaching more
To thinking minds than many homilies,—
It tells in no uncertain language of
The vanity in all which here we love,—
That all our restless seeking after bliss
Is but the drifting to another shore.

That men and empires have their little day,
Then turn to dust, as others have before,
That death is still the monarch of the world,
Before whose feet all things at last are hurled,
Before whose realm there is no closing door,
And has for all but one sad, darksome way.

VII

Of all the seasons of the year there's none
To melancholy people, like the fall,
That is, to persons of poetic mind,
For in this season they a beauty find
In earth and sky, which is transcending all

The wondrous glory of the summer gone.

For all its mellow beauty has a sadness,
Twixt tears and smiles, a sadness seen and heard
In nature's varied aspects and its notes,
Upon the air's dim haziness it floats:
The shrill cry of the migratory bird,
And tunes of vintage-reapers in their gladness.

'Tis in the fatal drooping of the flower,
'Tis in the stubble of the fields and meads,
Where crickets hold a concert day and night,
'Tis in the stormcloud's shadow and its flight
Across the waters and the sighing reeds,
'Tis in the gold and crimson of the bower.

'Tis in the rain that strikes against the pane
And leaves its diamonds on the bending straw,
'Tis in the mist which follows nightly shower,
A floating mantle of the Morning Hour,
'Tis in the swelling brooks which onward go,
With mystic songs to the majestic main.

And Melancholy is the Truth, said one,
Whose genius pierced through the life of man,
Who hated cant, deriding the Tartuffe,
And saw beneath the robe the devil's hoof,
A wandering exile from his native land,
The fascinating bard, the great Byron.

Forgive, O, lustrous name, that I should use
Thy music for a lyre so poorly strung!
But I did often in my youth, even now,
Admire the glory of his laurelled brow,
And felt that truth and freedom ne'er was sung,

As by this suff'ring highpriest of the Muse.

O, all ye learned critics of his art,
Who analyze by a mechanic rule,
Ye fail to see the grandeur of his soul,
That soared above the petty and the small,
Indifferent to the existing school,
Preferring Pegasus to any cart.

With the sublime he ever was in tune,
'Mid Alpen heights, or on "the boundless deep,"
Or 'mid the storm and deaf'ning thunders crash,
In darkest night, lit by the lightning's flash,
Or on the plains where vanished empires sleep,
Time's desolation 'neath a waning moon.

His harp did catch the minor music's flow
From nature's heart and human tragedy,
And when he laughed it was the cynic's smile,
Though he at heart was tender as a child,
But death to him had sweeter harmony,
Than life's brief dream with its relentless woe.

Likewise Sordino, after years of thinking,
Found in the dirge the acme of his search,
The home-call to a truer life's beginning,
When man shall cease from sorrow and from sinning,
The great, the final welcome of the church,
The note of peace which heav'n to earth is linking.

VIII

At length there came upon Sordino's city
An enemy with armies great and strong,

And laid a siege about its buttressed walls,
And since the strongest bulwark sometime falls
Before a cannonading fierce, and long,
So did its self-defences, without pity.

The conqueror did loot and kill and ravage,
While o'er it all the chimes sang forth the hour,
In notes which shamed the horror of that day,
And as he listened said: "Take them away,
Their music hath upon my men a pow'r,
Which makes a saint out of a bloody savage!"

Then from the lofty tow'r they were removed,
Against Sordino's pleadings, these to spare,
And carried hence, none but the victor knew—
And captive toilers whom at last he slew,—
Their value he surmised and used such care,
As for their preservation it behooved.

IX

O, heinous War, Hell's very incarnation!
Whose countenance is black with darkest hate,
Whose eyes have serpent's gleam of greed and lust,
And fiendish satisfaction, when the dust
Of God's fair earth with precious blood is sate,
Who laughs at the destruction of a nation.

Whose breath is pois'rous fumes and dire disease,
And darting flames, devouring man's abodes,
Whose voice with terror fills all living things,
And nought attracts except the vulture's wings,
Its rending roar the very heaven goads
Until the dark'ning cloud a-weeping flees.

Whose brutish hands, with gore and grime polluted,
Are strangling innocents and ripping wombs,
And gagging Virtue's cry, and sundering
The maiden from her mother; plundering
The aged and the sick, yea, even the tombs
Of those "at rest" are by this monster looted.

It rules the empires, and it rules the seas,
It is the prince of power in the air,
And kings and nations worship it with fear,
But drunk with blood they loud and wildly cheer,
And think its glory great beyond compare,
Yea, worth all loss and human miseries.

O, Christ, who stood on storm-tossed Galilee,
Reproaching evil, saying: "Peace be still!"
So all the fury of the storm and wave
Abated, and the struggling ship was safe,
Speak thou again that word divine, until
The world shall hear, and war shall cease to be!

O, may the day-spring from on High appear,
When this foul monster shall be chained in Hell,
When man, freed from its tyranny, shall be
The blessed of the Lord, in harmony
With every race which under heaven dwell,
And all his life be like a golden year!

X

Sordino from the fated city fled,
When he beheld destruction's hand engaged
In Vandalism on the house of God;
It seemed to him an awful chastening-rod,

Because of sin which heaven had enraged,
For which the blood of thousands now was shed.

When he perceived resistance was in vain,
The city's doom declared in blood and fire,
He left it under cover of the night,
With thousand others. Pausing in his flight
He saw the flames from the cathedral spire
Leap 'gainst the angry clouds of storm and rain.

He first sought safety at his country-seat,
A villa rich in orchard and in field,
Where he did shelter homeless refugees,
And here, for many days they lived in peace,
Until the country, too, itself must yield,
And valiant men before the foe retreat.

We will not here relate the conflict's trend,
Sufficient that at last the enemy
Was driven from the land by armies strong,
And as in days of the heroic song,
With plunder rich, across the stormy sea,
They to their home-land shores the course did wend.

Deep sadness fell upon Sordino's heart
For all the sorrow of his countrymen,
For all the ravages wrought by the foe,
But most of all his cup seemed overflow
With grief beyond the measure of our ken,
Because he from his chimes did have to part.

He restless grew, no place found him content,
No pleasure could his spirit satisfy,
His former love of study him forsook,

And e'en on nature he did cease to look
With that true, heartfelt joy of years gone by,—
His days in gloom and ennui were spent.

At last he in his heart resolved to go
Upon a journey—he knew hardly where—
In quest of his beloved bells, though none
For certain seemed to know where they had gone,
Still he would travel over land and mere,—
With this resolve his soul was soon aglow.

XI

To France he first of all did make his way,—
Enduring hardship on the boistrous sea,
And dangers on the shores of sullen foes,
But since to hearts of purpose strong no woes
Insufferable seem, thus agony,
Of any kind, could not his zeal allay.

He reached the wondrous city of the Seine,
The metropole of Europe's art and modes,
Where ever dazzling Show and Pleasure sweet,
Like youths in Daphne's grove a laughing meet,
Where Grecian deities have their abodes,
And genius hath reared a matchless fane.*

Where stands the armless Venus, unto whom
Poor Heine cried for help, but none received,
Since pagan culture is quite impotent
To save a soul in doubt and error spent,

*The Louvre.

Though for poor Heine none needs to be grieved,
Whose glory mingles with the maid of foam.

Great Paris, scene of most momentous deeds,
Far reaching consequences to the race;
Where monarchs died like vilest criminals,
While Anarchy did sing her bacchanals,
And trampled in the mire, what once did grace,
The highest places and most hallowed creeds.

Where great Napoleon, a demigod,
Ascended to the pinnacle of fame
And pow'r most dread, who made the monarchs quail
Before his genius, until a wail
Of anguish rose mid ruin and the shame
Of empires, struck by heav'n's avenging rod.

But even his greatness could not have its sway
O'er equilibriums by ages fixed;
His life was like the wierd and dazzling light
Of some stray star in its erratic flight,
Or like the image where the metals mixed,
The gold and silver with ignoble clay.

The head of gold, the feet of clay, and so
The little stone of Fate the giant felled,
The star erratic into exile sent,
Its lustre in ignominy misspent,
Still it had closed an age—whose doom was spelled,
The slave is free, the tyrant, too, must go.

But this was not the France Sordino knew,
Long time before the Corsican he lived,
Ere France had lost her faith in monks and nuns,

While chiming bells were more than roaring guns,
And in their potency the land believed,
Rejoicing that their fathers' faith was true.

His life fell in the days of Charles the Great,
When wars were pleasant pastime for the kings,
Who fought for many reasons quite terrestrial,
But sometimes, as they thought, for things celestial,
And nothing like the latter valor brings,
Inspired by bigotry and hellish hate.

When France was warring for her very life,
And Guise, the mighty lion, held at bay,
When Florence beat her foe at Marciano,
And poor Sordino lost his sweet campana,
'Twas in that age he lived and made his way
To Paris, weary from the worldly stife.

He traveled like a scholar, incognito,
And sought the company of learned men,
Disputing with them in the classic lore;
This helped him churchly places to explore,
Where might have been, perchance, a robber's den,
Since that of old has ever had a ditto.

"My Father's house ye made a den of thieves,"
Said Christ to priests who wrought for Him a cross,
But afterwards, full often, in His name
The priesthood has been guilty of the same:
What was a sister nation's grievous loss,
They proudly stored in dusky sacristies.

Such was the plunder of the noble art,
Which Philip from the Netherlands did take,

Such, too, the treasures which Napoleon
With ruthless warfare from the nations won;
Thus ever, where the priest his sign doth make
Upon the sin which pierced the sacred heart.

Such guilt may, even in Sordino's times,
Have rested upon some Parisian church,
Or abbey in its strange seclusiveness,
But everywhere he found but weariness,
Resulting from his all persistent search,
And nowhere did he see nor hear his chimes.

XII

Why should a soul consume its power and peace
In quest of that which useless seems and vague,
In following mirages of ideals,
And pass through many harassing ordeals,
Endure the cruel sneer of mobs that plague,
When one may dwell 'mongst them in mental ease?

Why follow, like a fettered slave, one's longing
Which sometimes leads through dun and dreary
 wilds,
O'er pathless hills and mountain tops afar,
And then points to a dim and distant star,
With faith a-smiling, like a little child's,
While spectral shadows round one's soul is throng-
 ing?

Because a gleam—as from a fiery globe—
Illumined souls before their incarnation,
And bound them with love's chain eternally,
That Beauty's face for ever they might see,

And ne'er be happy in their earthly station,
Unless their life in heav'n's pure light they robe.

This gleam was ever glowing in the heart
Of him whom men might say was "lacking sense,"
The light of beauty and a smould'ring love.—
Since strait-laced folk may now his acts reprove,
And fearing this, we shall the tale condense,
Of what took place, before he did depart.

One day he met a scholar from Vienna,
Whose home was on the banks of that fair stream,
Renowned in history and minstrel's song,
O'er whose blue waters, as they flow along,
Some olden romance hovers like a dream,
In saffron hues of terra di Sienna.

There traveled with this scholar a young woman
Whose beauty smote Sordino at first sight,
And made him captive unaware; how strange!
Since he had thought himself outside the range,
Now two score ten, ev'n of the wildest flight
Of any arrow from the little bow-man.

But such is man, who thinks, he knows himself,
And—like Sordino—very much besides,
Quite fortified by wisdom's splendid armor,
Who thinks his heart is dead to any charmer,
Will suddenly discover that there hides
Within its chambers still a little elf.

She was a coy, elusive little creature,
Uncaptured yet by suitors manifold,
Her father's only child, and motherless,
Whose cheerfulness his saddened heart did bless,

Whose eyes of Danube blue and hair of gold,
Commingled with her Mother's Grecian feature.

She was proficient in the classic learning,
Read Greek and Latin like her native tongue,
Italian, too, and did on Dante dote,
And metaphysics studied, but by rote,
For mental subtleties she was too young,
And was to Hella's songs too often turning.

Anacreon she knew by heart and set
His lyric and erotic odes to tunes,
And most of all she did with fondness love
His ἐρασμή πέλεια—the dove
Of Venus, odorous with sweet perfumes,
Her payment for the poet's canzonet.

And like an Amathusia she seemed,
To fond Sordino, who had ne'er beheld
Such loveliness of mind and body wed,
And then he knew that 'mid the past and dead
Of his own life, no being had compelled
His love like she whom he a goddess deemed.

But when he saw her father's jealous care,
He did not dare his hand to tender her,
But first of all sought to ingratiate
Himself to both, but most to the sedate,
Pedantic scholar, ready to concur
In all his views, though fallacy lay bare.

Thus suavity did win the learned man,
And he became Sordino's ardent friend,
And asked him to return with them to Wien,

Another thing he failed not to agree in,
And when their stay in Paris had an end,
He gladly journeyed with this Austrian.

XIII

On Danube's shores, 'mid wooded hills, a villa
Was smiling welcome to its lord and guest,
But most of all to her—whose name was Stella,
(Her father called her "pulchra me' puella")
For whom the servants ready had ein Fest,
Where once encamped the hosts of Attila.

A Florentine among Teutonic scenes,
Led thither by a love, yet unexpressed,
Forgot his sorrows, yea, forgot his bells,
Since nought like love its victim so compels
To full submission to a sweet behest,
The looks and smiles of one still in her teens.

Her beauty was the centre of all scenes,
Her voice the only music of each sound,
Her presence, sole embodiment of bliss,
And heaven itself it would have been, a kiss,
For which the Shibboleth he had not found,
Behind the garden-trees and flow'ry screens.

On horseback did they sometimes ride along
The winding roads, and most in early morn,
While yet the dew was trembling on the blade,
And all the minstrelsy of dreamy glade
Was like a stream Elysian to them borne,
With pure delight, estranged to earthly wrong.

And sometimes on the noble river's breast
They sailed, below the stately castle walls,
Or hoary ruins on o'erhanging cliffs,
Of ancient lore the sacred hieroglyphs,
Upon whose mystery the moonlight falls,
With fairy-charm which age of knighthood blessed.

'Mongst such are those of famous Dürrenstein
Which once imprisoned Richard Lionhearted,—
Returning from a holy pilgrimage,—
The English lion in an unknown cage,—
For ev'n his minstrel, from whom he had parted,
Knew not what walls his good lord did confine.

But he, the faithful Blondel, sought him long,
And traveled in disguise through Germany,
Until he learned of some great personage,
On whom king Leopold had wreaked his rage,
And now he sought this place most eagerly,
Without an aid or weapon, but a song.

A song which he, together with the king,
Had made one night among Judean hills,
A ballad full of stirring battle-scenes,
Of Crusaders in strife with Saracens,
Of victories, defeats and untold ills,
And this below the tow'r he now did sing.

And in the stillness of the summer night
His voice rose clear up to the battlement,
But none did deem it but a common lay,
Except the one who watched a flick'ring ray
Of one bright star, to him the song's ascent
Came like God's angels on the gleam of light.

He reached the middle of his song and ceased,
Then harkened for an answer from the tow'r,
When all at once he heard his master's voice
Conclude the lay, it made his heart rejoice.
He homeward sped, and soon a ransom's power
The monarch from captivity released.

This story Stella told the Florentine,
Who found it charming in her quaint Italian,
But would have substituted some fair lady
For doughty Richard, though perhaps more shady,
If held a ransom by a noble villain,
Found by her lover while she did repine.

A thing she disagreed with very strongly,
Since heroes she preferred to amorettes,
And poets, singing monarchs out of prison,
To luting minstrels whose life's mission
Is sentimental ditties and regrets,
Though she in heart felt this was stated wrongly.

And such is, after all, a maiden's heart,
Unknown to her, unsearchable to man,
It quotes one thing, while feeling quite another,
Though guileless like a sister to her brother,
Her head and heart are like a sprightly span
Of untrained colts which ever pull apart.

But we must shun continuous digression,
And turn to him, the hero of our tale,
Who made the rather sad discovery,
That Stella ne'ertheless did worship Chivalry,
But not in men of fifty, though all hale,
For he received a "No" to his confession.

Her heart cleaved to a youth in far off land,
A youth of prowess in her country's cause,
Though not bethrothed, she hoped the day would
 come,
When that should be, ev'n in her father's home,
This to Sordino a great sorrow was,
Since he had hoped to win her heart and hand.

He said adieu to these his friends, by chance,
And drew away, he cared but little whither,
Since wounded love has lost its grip on life,
And sees it like a night with horror rife,
Until the victim on some morning blither,
Does damn such meetings as that one in France.

For men at fifty may as truly love,
As boys of fifteen, and a little truer,
And, disappointed, feel the keenest pang,
But yet I have not heard a suitor hang
Himself, because he flatly failed to woo her,
Nor worth the while with rivals, have a row.

For wisdom grows with years, and manly reason
Becomes the load-star of the wanderer,
And man doth cease to be a woman's slave,
For which she may despise him as a knave ;
The "superman" she made, doth ponder her,
And knows, beneath her love is sometimes treason.

XIV

Vienna has a noble shrine ; ev'n then
It vied in glory with all Europe's fanes,
St. Stephen ;—thither did he go one day,
To see its beauty, more perchance, to pray,

For he would fain seek solace 'mongst the manes
Of the departed than the crowds of men.

There in the dimness of the lofty nave
He tarried long and mused upon the past,
On visored knights who thither came to find
Forgiveness, and assurance to their mind,
That God did sanction that their lot was cast
With them who fought for the Redeemer's grave.

Their sacred task he almost envied them,
To have a noble aim and be assured
That heaven its benediction on it smiles,
And loving hearts are with the weary miles,
For such a quest all things might be endured,
And death itself be life's great diadem.

A mission and a woman's love is all
A man should crave for earthly happiness,
Sordino thought, while absently his gaze
Did fall upon the sweet Madonna's face,
And he had none of these to lift and bless
His aimless, dark and love-tormented soul.

He humbly knelt before the ancient altar,
A stranger mid the holy solitude,
But what he said in pray'r must not be told
To all the world, whose cynic smile is cold;
Sufficient that the Saviour on the Rood
Imparted strength to him who seemed to falter.

Just then a clear-tongued bell rang from the tower,
With notes akin to one of his lost chimes,
Reminding him of his neglected quest;

He rose as if by a new zeal possest,
As when a mountaineer, who upward climbs,
Is fascinated by the vision's power.

XV

That night he had a dream, in which he heard
The music of his bells across the seas,
Whose notes came clearly from a purple haze,
And wandered with the breeze from place to place,
A-dancing with the billows' wild caprice,
And mingled with the cries of many a bird.

And floated round a many-colored sail,
Half-hoisted, flapping, listening between,
And eager to depart for that fair land,
Whence came the music, on whose purple strand
The ocean shifted from the dazzling sheen,
To emerald and amethystine pale.

And in the stern the smiling Stella stood,
A-beckoning to come with her away,
And he did hasten to the rocky shore,
But as he reached it, she was there no more,
The ship had carried her far out the bay,
And in its wake the waves were red as blood.

Then did he weep, until a gentle hand
Was laid upon his head, now bending low,
And looking up, a stranger met his eye,
Who said: "Why art thou here, why dost thou cry?
The melodies which o'er the waters go,
Proceed from chimes made in thy native land;

Thy own they are, go seek them till thou findest,
Then is thy journey ended, and the strife,
Then shalt thou know the joy which heaven will
 give,
So overwhelming that thou canst not live;
Now, henceforth thou must sacrifice thy life,
To those who bear the cross our God is kindest."

When from his dream he woke, he pondered long
Its meaning, and at last waxed confident,
It was an angel that had spoken thus;
For calling in distress, God heareth us,
His unseen ministers to us are sent,
To give us light, and weeping change to song.

He also felt assured, his chimes had found
A place across the seas, though not in France,
May be in England or some British isle,—
This thought provoked a melancholy smile,
For Richard's fame and knightly lance,
And Blondel's song were with it bound.

And he determined to depart full soon,
Yet one thing did his heart desire to see,—
The face of Stella, which both night and day
Did follow him, where-e'er he turned his way,
Her beck'ning in his dream might mean to be
A change of mind, before another moon.

Yea, might he but behold those eyes once more,
Receive again one look of kindliness,
And feast his famished heart upon her beauty,
And hear her speak, as once, forgetting duty,

And give him one adieu of hope to bless,
Then would he seek his chimes on any shore.

XVI

How man is ever living by illusions!
The more the better, why then shatter them?
Why kill the birds of Paradise with science?
Why meet old Superstition with defiance,
Since in the past her very garments' hem
Gave from life's guiltiness sweet absolution?

Why not let lore of Middle Ages reign,
The lore of fairy—and of elfin-land?
A world of strange, imaginary things,
Which gave to human mind its soaring wings,
And bore the simplest to a golden strand,
Where he forgot his poverty and pain.

What are your knowledge and inventions worth,
If they destroy man's fleeting happiness,—
Illusion's chiefest offspring, and life's goal?
Far better then the hut and back-log coal
Than mansions lighted by the magic press,
But without fairies and a glowing hearth.

Sordino's age was not like ours—of engines;
No Kipling to bid romance a farewell,
No wonders in the realm of rods and wheels,
No squeaking phonographs and Chaplin reels,
No railroads, autos, and, what was as well,
No Zeppelins, no bombs and submarines.

His was the vanished day of simple living,
Of child-like faith in man, and things unseen,

When next God's footstool poet, prophet stood,
And told that all which makes man glad is good,
That ever Eden's Tree of Life is green,
And to the world its leaves of healing giving.

And such a leaf was any happy dream,—
An omen or a message from beyond,
As truly as in good Hellenic days,
When at the Sibyl's cave men found their ways,—
And to Sordino its illusion fond
Became a prophecy, a guiding gleam.

XVII

A Catholic he was and had his passport,
And did not fear to take a ship for London,
Though rumor owned it, things were lively there,
And travellers had better take a care,
Where "Bloody Mary" ruled with fierce abandon,
Suspecting strangers to be of the base sort.

The base sort being chiefly protestant,
Or sympathizers with the cause of Cranmer;
And since he was not either, he might venture
To see the city without fearing censure,
And so, at last, he started out to wander
Through Germany, whose scenes did him enchant.

At last he reached the port of old Calais,
And bought a passage 'cross the English Channel,
According as the angel had him bidden,
Believing that his chimes were used or hidden
In London town, where back of pane or panel
He'd seek and find them on some happy day.

Now as the wind bore gently 'gainst the sail,
And slowly eked their distance from the shore,
The western sun lay ruddy on the wave,
His dream thereby made real, all things, save
The one whose face his heart did still adore,
She was not there this pilgrim strange to hail.

Upon him fell a sadness, which alone
The homeless, longing traveller doth know,
Augmented by a disappointed love,
And standing musing at the vessel's prow,
The only thing his wistful vision saw,
Was that red glow which on the water shone.

He stood there when the evening shadows fell,
And darkening storm-clouds rose o'er England's coast,
He stood there when the night closed from his view
The shores of France, within the deepest blue,
Through which a glim'ring light, the uttermost,
Was smiling him a dubious farewell.

He stood there when the waves began to roll,
The wind to sigh and whine in sail and rope,
And night closed round him with forebodings dark
Of dangers for the rocking little bark,
On which full many souls now stayed their hope,
That it would bear them to their journey's goal.

But he feared not, no, rather pleasure found
In the arising fury of the deep,
Since it expressed the sorrow of his soul,
And he did hear its wild alluring call,
Into its mystic rest at once to leap,
A rest beneath the billows' angry sound.

And now the elements did more and more
Unstop their many-voiced organ-keys:
The thunder's loud diapason, the shriek
Of wailing wind, the flopping and the creak
Of rigging; and the rain upon the seas,
The lightning's hiss and surging water's roar.

But all of this his heart enjoyed with glee,
And he refused to leave his lonely post,
Though drenched, and clinging to the vessel's rail-
ing,
A good old ship, though sorely tried, yet sailing,
It was her sturdy captain's boast,
That she could weather even the roughest sea.

Sordino heard in all the symphony
Of nature's stormy mood, the misery
And rage pent up in her great heart, like his,
Thus all its terror was to him a bliss,
He heard in it majestic melody,
Since all God's universe is harmony.

The wind grew chilly and at last him drove
Into the hold, where slumber soon him claimed;
And when the morning dawned, the ship was near
The cliffs of England; this a grateful tear
Brought from the anxious hearts, which almost
shamed
Sordino whom this sight left quite unmoved.

XVIII

Fair England, long by God elect and blessed,
His chosen land, as Palestine of old,

From which His light to all the world has shone,
Where Freedom sits with monarchs on their throne,
Where truth, more precious than the ruddy gold,
Is by her wise men fearlessly professed.

Where he, the many-minded genius
Arose to make her name and tongue immortal,
With never dying characters and song,
Who knew the soul among the vulgar throng,
As well as that of kings in castle portal,
And made them all so much akin to us.

Great Shakespeare, harbinger of Britain's glory,
The child of ages, product of a race,
Born in the fulness of the time,—the world awaking
To a new day, its rusty fetters breaking,—
He with his torch showed it the better ways,
And linked the new with ancient fairy-story.

Sordino's times were all with forces seething,
The new and old at war for mastery,
But through its hope and fear, its love and hating,
The nation with its rulers vacillating,
There came the age when light gained victory,
And Freedom through the songs of Shakespear
breathing.

That Freedom then, as ever, bathed in blood,
And tried by fiery fagot and the stake,
The Freedom of the soul to trow and live,
As Christ commanded, ev'n that men should give—
Like He—their lives for His own Kingdom's sake,
For none was free as He, upon the rood.

The voice of Freedom whispered through the world—

Like quick'ning breezes of advancing Spring,
Which wake the modest crocus 'mongst the hills,
And violets along the laughing rills,
And bid returning songster's music ring
Through budding woodlands by the mist impearled.

Thus Freedom's voice did wake the souls of men,
The lowly and the mighty felt its power,
But most the pure in heart who saw their God,
Their hearts rejoiced ev'n 'neath the scourging rod ;
Alone they stood in suffering's dark hour,
But in a strength which heaven did grant them then.

XIX

Sordino came to London just in time
To view a drama, not unseldom seen
By Englishmen in Mary Tudor's reign,
Who left upon her country's page a stain
So dark and bloody that scarce any queen
Has ever steeped her rule in fouler crime.

From Newgate prison, in the early morn,
An old decrepit man was rudely led,
Amid the gibes and scoffings of a mob,
Which drowned the words of pity and the sob ;
Abuses fell upon his hoary head ;
But for his Master they were gladly borne.

They brought him to an open square, where stood
An upright stake with iron rings and chains,
Awaiting his frail body to entwine,

And round about were twigs of birch and pine,
Piled up in bundles, groaning with the pains,
They should inflict on one whose life was good.

The rising sun cast on the earth a soft,
Warm, trembling light, God's Cherubim who told
To all whose soul had vision: "He is Love;"
At least one marked it, smiled and looked above,
Into infinity of blue and gold,
And as his eyes were lifted thus aloft,

He said: "What profit hath a man, if he
Should gain the entire world and lose his soul?
What can he give for it in true exchange?
This is the truth which saves or doth avenge,
And now as I am here to give my all,
I thank thee Father for the Victory."

A pray'r which followed was by clamor drowned.
The torch applied set loose the crackling flame,
Which leaped about his limbs and to his face,
Extinguishing the glory of his gaze,
And silencing the lisping of His name
Who hath with immortality him crowned.

XX

I said, Sordino was a Catholic,
But more than that, a true philosopher,
And at this sight within himself he mused:
"How is the Gospel of the Christ abused
By those who should its saving love confer,
Upon a world with sin and hatred sick!"

“The light of love changed into flames of hell,
The praise of joy to wails of agony,
The cross into a fetish of dark fear,
Around the which the fiendish demons leer,
While erring souls are shackled to the tree,
And fagots blaze amid the rabble’s yell.”

“How terrible is zeal without true knowledge;
How awful bigotry, born by religion!
How black is priestcraft, bred by selfishness,
Before whose judgment-seat there’s no redress
For any sympathizer with rebellion
Against the schemes of Jesuitic college!”

His tender-heartedness aroused such thought;—
He paused, and crossed himself, perhaps he sinned,—
In thinking thus, and carried thus away
By that sad spectacle, and then did say,
Within himself: “May be the fellow grinned,
Because his faith a glory to him brought.”

“Was that the motive which led him to suffer?
Then was he despicable more than they
Who brazed themselves his dirty flesh to fry,
Then was his smoke a stench beneath the sky,
His ashes unfit for his country’s clay,
He, not a martyr, but a worthless duffer.”

“If pride, quite obstinate, of fancied light,
Diviner, truer than of mother church,
Did actuate the Protestants to die,
Then there is justice in the people’s cry,
For such an arrogance the truth will smirch,

And rob its scepter of celestial right."

Thus did philosopher and churchman speak,
And now the poet whispered: "Peace be still!
Where are thy chimes? All England needs their tone
Of harmony to make the people one;
Thy golden chimes! At last their music will
Interpret all which men through suff'ring seek."

XXI

Pained and disgusted with the sight, he passed
Out of the city—'twas not very far
Before he struck the open country-road—
Which led to Shoreditch church, and meadows
broad,
And fields of golden grain, where nought did mar
The peace of all that was with nature classed.

Amid a field, below a hillock's slope,
He saw a man at work, also a lad,
With sickles in their hands, a-cutting grain,
He stopped and looked at them, the boy with pain
Seemed, raise himself, when he a bundle had
Completed, trying with his sire to cope.

And while he stretched his aching, weary back,
He gazed across the field with longing look,
A-measuring how many days 'twould take
To reach the end—the field's dividing stake,
Then spit into his hands and firmly took
His place behind his father's cleancut track.

This incident Sordino much impressed,

He read at once the feelings of the boy,
That not alone in body, but in mind
He suffered, sought deliverance to find,
And so he said: "I will the lad employ,
I need a guide whom heav'n with dreams hath
blessed."

The father would not listen to Sordino,
Whose English he but scarcely understood,
And half afraid of this so swarthy stranger,
In times, like those, so full of lurking danger,
But when he saw his gold, it seemed quite good,
And gave consent to let his helper go.

But not before his mother had been seen,
Her sanction gained, for what he felt some fears,
And so they left the sheaves of ripened wheat,
And sought their humble dwelling's blithe retreat,—
A little cottage, thatched, and gray with years,
Amid the trees and garden-beds still green.

And here they tarried till the close of day,
Till Vesper-bells proclaimed its toil should cease,
Yea, tarried over night, for mother's heart
Is more reluctant with the child to part,
But in the morn she said: "Do as ye please,"
And gave her blessing, and they went away.

And as they left, the peals from Shoreditch tow'r
Came on the crisp'd morning air like streams
Of living water from the Holy Mount,—
Where priests with silver basins at its fount
Oblation brought to golden Cherubims,
Amid rejoicing of the festive hour.

Their cleansing tones, refreshing to the mind,
And nature, smiling, drank their harmony,
The crystal dew vibrating with delight,
A veil of mist, the garment of the night,
Hung o'er the deepest valley, seemed to flee
Before their dancing with a timid wind.

Sordino felt their rapture like a flow
Of scented warmth, which crept through limbs and
brain,
And to his heart, where lotus-like it stayed,
Until each chilling sorrow was allayed,
And joy of other years returned again,
Enkindling in his face a new life's glow.

The silent, wond'ring lad, who followed him,
Had often heard this gladsome melody,
It was a part of him from infancy,
It cast upon his soul a witchery,
From which no mood or attitude was free,
And claimed him for a realm remote and dim.

It was the springtime of the golden age
Of England's minstrelsy, and here and there
A youth did feel its heart-throb 'mid the flowers,
And saw sweet, flitting forms amongst the bowers,
And heard transporting voices in the air,
Which captured him and did his life engage.

And though, perhaps, he never won a name,
And though it spoiled his life for "useful things,"
And Fate endowed him, as she did a Greene,
With wretched penury and squalor mean,—
Still he who sees and hears and gladly sings

Hath recompense, transcending gold and fame.

Woe, unto him around whose cradle danced
The fairies on the golden morning ray,
Anointing him with essence of the rose,
Into whose soul the magic music flows,
To shape itself into a deathless lay,
Who all denies, by earthliness entranced.

To him no smiling faces shall appear,
When comes the eve of life with lowering sky,
But voices chiding him with cowardice,
Because he chose the lucre and the ease,
And did his calling wilfully deny,—
To him no light shall be,—but darkness drear.

XXII

’Twas here that from the church and nature rose
The English stage, when he, the stable-groom,
Should write the Drama of Humanity,—
The greatest poet of all history,
Who mingled laughter with the deepest gloom,
Life’s music with its sterner prose.

The modern drama,—modern Ishmael,
Begotten of religion; like a youth,
Fair, myrtle-crowned, and slender, innocent,
With dancing measures upon pleasure bent;
Then cast away by “guardians of the truth,”
And, homeless, nourished at the secret well.

And when his great Emancipator came,
He dared to dance and brisk on country lanes,

But not in London town (his mother's there) ;
Until the king of poesy laid bare
His ancient birthright, lost 'mongst Grecian manes,
Then waxed he strong and daily gained in fame,

And found a home within the city wall,
Where still he dwells, and ever will abide,
In his duplicity, since life is very double,
A-laughing, crying, at its fleeting bubble,
Appearing on the restless ocean-tide,
In morning splendor, or dusk even-fall.

Still Ishmael, to Sarah's first begotten,
Still preached against by heaven's best elect,
And he returns, at times, with taunts and gibes ;
But if they put away some modern scribes,
And did great Shakespeare's drama resurrect,
Our modern stage would not be half as rotten.

Regenerated, cleansed, what ally this
To all that's true and noble under heaven !
A mirror of ourselves ? Much more ! A vision
Of life's ideal, and its highest mission,
And though the weary heart must mirth be given,
The thrill of truth's clear gleam is better bliss.

So, let the true born help the quondam alien,
They need each other in their common quest
For happiness, the rainbow's pot of gold,
And let the secret of the quest be told
By each, in love, that each may do his best
To lift and cheer, where life is low and failing.

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XXIII

Into the city on the Thames they walked,
And to the inn, where he had rented rooms,
An hospitable inn, by no means small,
Of quaint designs, o'ershadowed by some tall,
Outspreading elm trees, in whose pleasant glooms
The thievish rooks to one another talked.

And there were gardens in its rear, where fruit
Of cherries and of pears were sweetly ripe,
For London still had nature in its heart,
Long since ejected by a soul-less mart;
Though knowing statesmen may its grandeur pipe,
Another Shakespeare it makes ever mute.

Here did Sordino hope to respite find
From journeys which accounted seemed but vain;
He would his simple country-lad engage
In spying bells, and in the work of page,
For such a boy he easily could train:
He had an honest heart and ready mind.

This tavern was, however, seldom quiet,
But oft for merry souls a rendezvous,—
For wits and poets, chiefly for the latter,
To whom the outside of the social platter
Was less important than the inside true,
Whose highest law was their own spirit's fiat.

When God makes poets He's misunderstood,
The mixture is too much for common folk;
The blending of all things in earth and heaven,

Of light and darkness, unto them is given,
An angel and a fiend in common yoke,
The great extremes of evil and of good.

As in time's morn the light from darkness sprang,
And cosmic beauty out of Chaos rose,
Thus out of reeking stews and taverns came
A Marlow's strong, illuminating flame,
And stars of magnitudes did follow close,—
The morning stars which rapt together sang.

XXIV

The sights of London were but meagre then,
Compared with all its wonders of to-day;—
Still each age thinks his own the grandest, best,
A truth, may be, why else the ceaseless quest?
Though it is left to Wisdom yet to say,
If things are worse or better among men.

The Tow'r knew greater anguish in those days,
The bridge gave terror with its ghastliness
Of hoary heads uplifted high on spits;
The palaces had dungeons, vermin-pits
Of heartless cruelties and grim distress;
And halls of splendor had dark, hidden ways.

But there was sunlight on the crimson tile,
And there was blueness in the open sky,
And breezes bore the scent of rose and thyme,
As in the morn they met St. Mary's chime,
No cloud of smoke, as now, oppressed the eye,
And made the gentle breath of heaven vile.

And men were frank and honest with their friends,
And also frank and honest with their foes,
And either loved with nakedness of soul,
Or fought until one of the two did fall,
Strong was the love, and hard the hater's blows,
While now his love and hate man subtly blends.

Sordino loitered much in lane and street,
And listened well to every swinging bell,
And searched the city for his treasure lost,
But not a sound was from a steeple tost,
Of its abiding-place his ear to tell,
Nor did a single clue his vision meet.

He daily searched, until the winter fog
Began to close about the sightly town,
Then melancholy claimed him for her own,
And lest he should be lost in grief and groan,
He sought the company of those who drown
The sorrows of their hearts with ale and grog.

XXV .

Once poets tuned their lyres in praise of Bacchus,—
Forsooth he was a mirth-inspiring god—
All garlanded with leaves of blooming vine,—
Adored by Aphrodite and the Nine,—
Bacchant and Satyr at his worship trod
Fantastic measures, such as now would wrack us.

Bards have turned preachers, which is for the better,
And no more should their songs extol his name,
But rather sound the anguish and the woe
Brought upon man by this relentless foe,

Take up the note of poverty and shame,
And ills of drunkenness which man enfetter.

Until his pow'r, in human nature seated,
As on a throne, shall no more have its sway,—
When man shall cease forgetfulness to borrow,—
Of failures, disappointments and dark sorrow,—
From his delusions, which no ills allay,—
Until—until—his reign shall be defeated!

But judge not harshly those who suffer most,
The victims of the cup, the self-condemned,
Who fight a hopeless battle and go down;
Show love and pity, rather than a frown,
For though the sot by men may be contemned,—
Still there is One who came to save the lost.

We know but little why he gave himself
An abject slave to appetite and lust,
What passions of past generations found
In him their culmination, held him bound,
And though he struggled hard, it seems he must
Into the depths of sin and darkness delv.

Perchance ambition was his Waterloo,
And having lost the last and strongest trench,
He spends a starless night mid weeping gloom,
Abandoning life's dreams to their dark tomb,
He seeks, at last, his soul's remorse to quench
With what he knows his manhood will undo.

Perhaps the fire of love has been extinguished,
And left but cooling ashes on the hearth,
And one, whose face was radiant with light,

Moves 'round him like a shadow of the night,
And since his life has lost its highest worth,
He turns to Rum, and soon is all relinquished.

XXVI

When men are drunk, they often babble things,
They scarce would whisper to a bosom-friend,
But when the wine has loosened sense and tongue,
The hidden secret to the crowd is flung,
And with an oath its owner will defend
A truth exaggerated, till the ring

Of brawlers doth declare it is a lie,
For which he ought to buy a round of drinks;
Thus in that tavern, on a foggy night,
A group was sitting in the candle-light,
Around a table, drinking, till their blinks
Did tell that Reason was about to fly.

And one, a bearded, lion-voiced sailor,
Began to tell of escapades at sea,—
Of war in foreign lands, of victory,
In such a loud and boasting way, that three
Out of the five did laugh derisively,
And said, he was a bandy-legged tailor.

At which he swore and drained his tankard dry,
And called them all a motley lubber-gang,
And rose to go, but then his friends cried "no,"
"You must not leave us yet, for dontcher know,
The best is coming? Say how did ye hang
Those tinklers in the tow'r?—Let's have a rye!"

Sordino being witness to this scene,
Approached the table and said : "Gentlemen,
Allow me to provide a drink for all,"
A sentence which upon their ears did fall
With some surprise, since he a stranger ; then
A grin of acceptation in their mien.

And he sat down with them, and freely drank,
And paid for all the drinks, the barmaid poured,
Thus made them almost feel, he was their host,
And when he ordered for their midnight lunch a
roast,

They sang his praise ; the grizzly sailor roared :
"Say, fellow, have you robbed the Venice bank?"

They revelled, and caroused, and stories told,
The most of which were tavern-coarse and smutty,—
The sailor being richest in his stores
Of drunken bouts and fights on foreign shores,
But as the chemist in the chimney-sut finds tutty,
Thus sought Sordino in this slag the gold.

For he had thought at first to see a glint
Of something in the "tinklers and the tower,"
And now he tried to draw the sailor out
On this allusion in his fellow's flout ;—
An instant's hesitation and a lower,
And then the old tar understood the hint.

"The tinklers, aye, ha! ha! those merry bells,
We carried up from France to Limerick,—
And nearly lost in a confounded gale,—
Aye, aye, old top, by these there hangs a tale,—
I heard from one who wounded lay and sick,—
A soldier who had seen a hundred hells."

“Those bells were taken in a bloody war
Sir,—what is that to thee?—another drink!”
Sordino forced a laugh, and ordered wine,—
A bottle of old port—none did decline,
But drank, until the weak began to wink,
And Silence made encroachment round the bar.

The sailor bibbed the longest, ate his roast,
And told Sordino, how the bells were sold
To a great churchman in the Irish isle,
That they are ringing daily from a pile
Most venerable, whence no price of gold
Can e'er return them to their native coast.

Sordino knew, they were his own, and smiled
To learn the place where strangely they had landed,
And when the sailor swore it all was true,
Sordino from the company withdrew,
But not before it was of him demanded,
That what he heard for ever must be “tiled.”

XXVII

Sordino looking for his boy that night,
Found him departed, whither, none could tell;
They sought him in the tavern and the street,
But all in vain; the watchman on his beat
Was queried, as he passed and cried: “All’s well!”
And laughingly replied: “He’s out of sight!”

The boy had weary grown and sick for home,
When he his master saw with drunkards douce,
And dared the denseness of the fog, to find

That place which daily occupied his mind,—
The little cottage 'mongst the trees, recluse,
Seemed grander than the city's pillard dome.

A dog might find its way, but not a child,
Through such a maze, bewildering and weird;
He thought, he surely knew the homeward road,
And eagerly, for hours, he onward strode,
But only to discover, what he feared:
He was as lost as 'mid a forest wild.

The Thames was like a spectral realm of sound
And shapes: The masts of many ships at tow
Were dimly visible, and larger seemed,—
Like mighty giants, as the moonlight beamed
Into the woolly fog. The sounds below:—
The river's song, and baying of a hound.

All else was silent till a sailor coughed
And damned the dog which thus disturbed his sleep;
And now the wand'ring lad called out in fear:
"I'm lost, oh, help me, who-soe'er is near!"
To which a voice arose, as from the deep:
"It is a lubber straying from his croft."

But then, ere long, there was a splash of oar,
And muffled talking twixt two drowsy tars,
The boy took heart, since rescue was at hand;
But when he found himself pushed out from land,
And lifted to a deck of lofty spars,
He kind of wished himself back to the shore.

The sailors showed him to a bunk for rest.
"Yea, in the morn the fog may lifted be,

So you can find your way," thus cheered they him;
But as of old the halfbaked Ephraim
Howled on his bed, so would now even he,
Had not submission been for him the best.

XXVIII

The fog grew lighter with the dawn of day,
As did the boy's heart after night of weeping,
He early 'rose, and would have left the ship,
But since for boatswain he possessed no tip,
He dared not rouse him from his pleasant sleeping,
And distance from the shore compelled his stay.

At last both crew and passengers awoke,
And all gazed at the lad, some with a smile,
When of his rescue told, some poked their fun;
But 'mongst the passengers his eye met one,
Who read the trouble of a homesick child,
And in strange accents kindly to him spoke.

She seemed to him the fairest he had seen,
A spirit, from the silv'ry mist emerged,
A gleam of light, strayed from the hidden sun,
Enlivening the sodden scene and dun,
A Venus from the foam where billows surged,
Born to be worshiped, or to be a queen.

But what she said to him was quite Egyptian,
It mattered not, since he could understand
The sympathy and goodness of her heart,
A thing much better than linguistic art
In any woman, yea, in any man,—

Though speech is fine, the deed is much more Christian.

She gave him food and wine and cheered his soul,
Then left him to himself, an hour or so,
When came the captain and thus to him spake:
"Art thou a stranger here, or canst thou make
Thy way alone and knowest where to go,
When lifted is the fog's distressing pall?"

To which the lad replied: "I know the town,
When I can see its street and thoroughfare,
And now can find my way up to the inn,
Where dwells my master; oh, it was a sin,
That I deserted him, since he may care!
I will return to him;—please let me down!"

To which the captain said: "We have on board
Two passengers who wish an inn to find,
And canst thou guide them to such place, my son?
That lovely lady, whom you met, is one,
The other is her father, noble, kind,
A foreign scholar, and methinks, a lord."

The boy responded readily to this,
As mid-day drew on clear, became their guide,
Up to that quite pretentious hostelry,
Half glad, half 'fraid his master there to see,
But ignorant how fate strode by his side,
And how it seldom seems to go amiss.

XXIX

That afternoon Sordino sought his place
Among the garden-trees, a rustic seat,
Which during gloomy days had stood alone,
But now again the sun so brightly shone,
Inviting him to this belov'd retreat,
Though it had lost the summer's tender grace.

And whom should here his pensive eyes behold,
But one of whom he at that moment thought,
And as he met her quite astonished gaze,
Surprise brought strong emotions to his face,
He knew not what strange magic this had wrought,
His heart beat fast, his hands grew clammy cold.

She smiled, and greeted him in his own tongue,
Then wist he that it was no mere illusion,
But Stella, yea, the Stella of his dreams,
So strange, so sweetly strange, it ever seems
To lonely lovers such a rapt confusion,
When that which separates aside is flung.

And yet it did not give to him the joy
Of one who knows why his beloved came;
He wondered much, but did not dare to ask,
His self-control became a subtle mask,
Which hid the raging of the inward flame,
That might again a newborn hope destroy.

A woman's eye can look through lover's feint,
Behind his mask she sees the naked soul,
And laughs with mingled sympathy and scorn,
She suffers not because he is forlorn,

And rather likes to see him prostrate fall
Before her feet, as if she were a saint.

And Stella knew, it racked Sordino's mind
Why she was there, but only this she told:
"My father and myself last night arrived
In London harbor, but the fog contrived
To keep us captives in the vessel's hold,
Until this morn, when we this place did find."

"How found ye it?" Sordino dared to question.
"A lad who said his master's lodging here,
Did guide us, and, methinks I see him there."
Sordino turned and saw the boy's despair,
And called him in a tone that felled his fear,
He came, and was forgiv'n without confession.

And Stella took his hand and stroked his head,
Sordino wishing that he was the lad,
He found a coin and told him to be gone,
And like the earth from which the fog was blown,
The boy felt in his heart relieved and glad,
And brushed his master's clothes and made his bed.

Alone, the conversation of the two
Was chiefly about trifles and the weather,
With many pauses, since so much did press
Sordino's heart, so much he would confess,
And since it was so strange to be together
With her whom he adored, yet did not know.

Soon Stella, pleading cold, arose to go,
Without a promise of another meeting,
Sordino feeling chills about his heart,

And as they from the garden did depart,
That little hour so full, and yet so fleeting,
Seemed to him fatal, and mal à propos.

XXX

Love's like a great musician, whose deft fingers
Control the hidden pow'r of organ-keys;
He plays upon the soul with mastery,
And uses all the stops of melody,
Of deepest sorrow, highest ecstacies,
Of stormy fugues, or tune that softly lingers.

Thus did he play upon Sordino's heart,
When to himself he suddenly was left;
A flood of passion overwhelmed his soul,
In which he heard himself her name to call,
And spent, did leave him painfully bereft,
Yea, caused unmanly, bitter tears to start.

He wiped away the furtive tear, and went
Into the bar-room, where he called for wine,
And freely drank, then entering the street,
The sailor of last night he chanced to meet,
Who told him, for a drink he sore did pine,
And had, alas! his very farthings spent.

Sordino handed him sufficient coin
To make him happy for another night;
He thanked him most profusely, and betook
Himself into the tavern's pleasant nook,
Where he did find his life's supreme delight,—
A cup of sack and others it to join.

Sordino sauntered carelessly along,
And with no aim but to assuage his mind,
Which wandered twixt a ray of hope and fear,
When all at once he saw her drawing near,
In company with one whose eye did find
Her smile surcharged with an affection strong.

A moment's glance told of his manly cast;
Well-knit and tall, in military suit,
But with a face so much unlike her mien;
And what Sordino could instantly glean,
It had a strength, but not of thought and truth,
But rather courage, stemming any blast.

Correctly he surmised, this very man
Was Stella's fiancé; and Jealousy,
That "greeneyed monster," held him by the throat,
Or, as in modern parlance "had his goat,"
A phrase suggestive of the purity
Of English, even among a college clan.

The jealousy of outraged marriage bonds,
Real, or imagined as Othelo's,
Oft finds expression in a dark revenge,
The faithless spouse is treated as a wench,
The vile seducer suffers every loss,
Unless, perchance, he with his prize absconds.

With hapless suitors has she gentler ways,
When pledgless smiles is all they have obtained,
Though none may fully know what she may do,
(For even of such full many ones she slew),
But in this case, Sordino, deeply pained,
She led about as in a dreamy haze.

He wandered on the banks of wimpling Thames,
And on the anchored ships did idly stare,
But had no mind for all the life and mirth
Beneath the languid sails upon the firth,
Since nought he saw but that one happy pair,
And but two eyes, more glorious than gems.

With night's approach his feelings took the hue
Of creeping shadows and the purple dark,
And sadness grew to an oppressive load,—
Then Jealousy to anger did him goad,
And to its fouler plots he once did hark,
Which with a frenzy did his blood imbue.

Then came the music of St. Mary's bell,
Commingling with St. Paul's of deeper tongue,
And oped his prison of unhappiness,
They had a solace that could calm and bless,
And when the last vibrating note was rung,
He homeward turned, and whispered : "All is well."

XXXI

As a philosopher Sordino tried
To make himself believe that all was well,
Howe'er something opposed his wise decree,—
He sought to sup, but found each dish to be
Devoid of savor both in taste and smell,
His spleen the head's philosophy defied.

He sought his couch and courted gentle sleep,
And stoically scorned his love-affair,
But Somnus was so far away, unheeding,
And thoughts in solitude were slowly feeding

Upon his heart, like lions in their lair,
Instead of rest, his misery grew deep.

The clock struck ten, he rose and left his room ;
The bar was lively, and he chose its folly ;
There was the sailor, garrulous and drunk,
In company with one, a quondam monk,
From Henry's reign, when monks, unduly jolly,
Were driven from pretended cloister-gloom.

But if the ruby brightness of his nose
Was then acquired, or in his homeless state,
Is not for me to say, but it surpassed
Even his who years had sailed before the mast,
And with the aid of gin and stormy fate
Had made it blossom like an Irish rose.

These two from spheres so far apart had met
Across a stoop of ale, which like the river
Of classic eld can quench all mundane sorrow,
Make men forgetful of the past and morrow,
Upon whose bosom dreams all sunlit quiver,
Until it empties in a sea of jet.

Upon the sailor's quick discovery
Of Count Sordino's presence, he approached
Him with a courtsy very risible
And whispered that he had something to tell,
Which on their precious secret did encroach,
And asked him, come aside from company.

Sordino followed with a sense of fear,
That it was money which the rogue was after,
And cared but little for his muddled talk ;
Soon on the dark, deserted garden-walk

They stood, where faint the hum and laughter
Of drinking men, fell on the listening ear.

In broken sentences, and low, the croon
Confided to Sordino something strange:
He had that very eve beheld the man,
Who brought the bells from France to old Ireland,
First on the street, then on a garden-bench,
Embracing a young lady, 'neath the moon.

Moreover, he had chanced to meet a fellow,
Who used to wear the cowl, in whilom days,
But had doffed cloth and everything religious,
And though his story was somewhat ambiguous,
He claims to know the chimes, and doth much praise
Their wondrous tones as very clear and mellow.

This tale engrossed Sordino's mind intensely;
They entered, sought the monk, who half asleep
Sat by a table all alone; the two
Aroused him with a drink of better brew,
Now with the sailor he the best did reap
From the Count's interest and liberality.

Sordino made agreement with these men
To go with him to Ireland, even that week,
Which they did promise for a goodly hire,—
For both declared, they knew the very spire,
Around whose golden cross his chimes did seek
Their flight up to the list'ning choirs of heaven.

XXXII

O, god of gold, whose universal sway

Is not the underworld, on the Plutonic shore,
And hideous, like that of Spencer's dream,
But on our terra's face, bright with the gleam
Of mid-day sun, thy power has ever more
Commanded human nature to obey!

Thou sittest not in gloomy woods and caves,
A loathsome creature with the hoarded pelf,
But in the palace and the mansion bright,
In marble temples large and fair, bedight,
A princely being, though controlled by Self,
To whom most men submit themselves as slaves.

The beautiful, the learnéd, and the strong
Are vying with the baser mass to serve
Thee ardently, that favor they may find,
They offer beauty, skill of hand and mind,
And ceaseless toil, until the vital nerve
Of life is gone, the source of joy and song.

Some barter soul and body for the gold,
And bear but semblance to the freeborn man;
The food is rich, the wine is sparkling red,
What matter then, if soul and heart are dead;—
But in the darkness stand the masses wan,
And homeless children shiver in the cold.

Thou rulest kings and statesmen in their places,
Thou makest war, and causest it to cease,
Thou art the world's supremest autocrat,
And e'en our land is bending on the mat
Before thy power's terrible increase,
Which even the shallow lawgiver amazes.

It is not lavish gifts alone that bind,
But ev'n the droppings of the shining ore,
Thus here, the tips, Sordino gave the salt,
Enthralled him to a virtue or a fault,—
So in a whisper, recklessly he swore:
“I'll take that coward and knock out his wind!”

Just then Sordino's foe was entering
The bar-room with a smile of exultation;—
The salt arose and held him by the arm,
The soldier looked at him with small alarm,
Or rather with a frown of irritation,
And sought the drunken sailor from him fling,—

Who brawled aloud: “Thou Judas 'Scarioth,
Who would again for thirty shillings sell
Our holy Mary's son, look on my face
As one who helped thee in thy wicked ways,
To make a fortune on a stolen bell,
Inscribed with glory to Lord Zebaoth!”

“I knew not better then, but now I do,—
Those bells, we freighted, were but stolen good,
And thou the thief, enriched by robbing God,—
Thou thinkest, all are resting 'neath the sod,
Who knew their tale, but by the holy Rood,
There is one yet alive who'll make thee rue!”

At which the soldier grasped his sword to fight;
The sailor laughed: “Strik'st thou the weaponless?”
He fell upon the floor, stabbed in the breast.
Then rose Sordino and to all confess:
“I am the man behind this sorry mess,
But will take pains to settle it aright.”

He drew his sword and challenging his rival,
They bore upon each other with a fury,
Which in Sordino reached a double strength,
He felt that fate had brought him this, at length,
Not even the Archbishop of Canterbury,
Could stop him now from being the survival.

The parries of the combatants revealed
Their mastery in fencing, and it seemed
A doubtful issue who should win the fray,
When suddenly besides the sailor lay
The soldier with a gash, from which there streamed
A flood of life, the young man's doom was sealed.

That night the sailor and the soldier perished ;
Sordino and his page set out on flight ;
But Stella and her father mourned the loss
Of one whom they thought gold, but was mere
dross,—
A fortune-soldier with no sense of right,
Who nought but selfish aims had ever cherished.

A double life may win the noblest heart
By hiding foulness neath pretended good,
Until the judgment-day reveals the truth,
And to the innocent the crushing ruth,
When he, that trusted was, is understood,
And all dissemblings from his life depart.

XXXIII

The foot is fleet when conscience spurs it on,
And fear of death is calling in one's trail,
Then lonely country roads and midnight dark
Seem better than the torch-illumined park,

Where smiling faces even a stranger hail
On gala-nights in merry old London.

And to possess a trusted friend, in flight,
Who knows the road and place of safe retreat,
Is more than thousand when all things are well,
His whispered counsel more than when they yell
Their loud approval in the hour of heat,
While wine is flowing, on a banquet night.

The boy did follow him, and strange to tell,
The monk had offered him his services,
And led the way, for much he traversed had
The country near and far. Sordino, glad
To grasp this straw of help in his distress,
Did follow him through lane and murky dell.

Amid its trees a hermit's hut did stand,
Upon whose door the monk three times did knock ;
"Who's there?" a voice did clearly ask within,
The monk replied: "Thy well-known brother
Quinn;"

The door did ope, a man in cloister-frock
Appeared with light and crucifix in hand.

"Grant to us all a shelter over night,
True sons of Holy Church, though fugitives,
Not without recompense shall be thy care,
For though we nothing in our hands do bear,
This gentleman no favors e'er receives,
Without a thanks which lingers with delight."

"I do not covet payment for a favor,"
The hermit answered, "hospitality

Is but a duty upon all enjoined,
And deeds of kindness into lucre coined
Cannot in heaven as holy treasures be
Stored up, since of man's selfishness they savor."

"But I would know who comes to hermit's cot,
With fear upon his face and hard of breath."
To which the monk replied : "A man of rank
From that most classic land, where Dante drank
From the clear fountain which o'ercometh death,
Gives hope to hearts whose is the exile's lot."

"As 'neath the temple in Jerusalem
A fountain issued forth all sweet and clear,
So doth from mother-church a well-spring flow,
And all who drink thereof must feel the glow
Of life within which makes them see and hear
The joy that trembles round Christ's diadem."

"His quest is to regain some precious bells,
That blessed his land, to whom his soul is wed,—
And on his painful journey he has found
The man who stole them, brought him to the
ground ;
From dire avengers he has justly fled,
Protect him thou, lest him some villain quell."

The hermit promised him his hut's protection,
And of a secret cave beneath a tree,
Meanwhile the monk and page should preparation
Make for departure to that stalwart nation,
Whose melodies, one with its history,
Have from its sacred lore the true inflection.

XXXIV

With first grey dawn of day the hermit rose
To pray, as was his custom every morn,
And with him knelt Sordino, in contrition,
For through the hours of night the awful vision
Of wanton murder to his mind was borne,
And robbed him of all rest and soul-repose.

And to the holy man he did confess,
And begged his absolution, which was granted,
But still the deed so weighed upon his heart,
That when his two companions did depart,
He fain would have his own death-dirges chanted,
To make an end of harrowing distress.

Such is the soul, that once attuned to peace,
Must pass through Becca's vale of dark remorse,
In whom the joy of heav'n and grief of hell
Are seeking one another to expel;
Well then if the afflicted take recourse
To Him who calms the storm and gives surcease.

The ruing of our sins, the soul's repentance,
The coming to oneself, and meeting God,
Is, after all, the only way to rest,
All else is but a vain and foolish quest,
A hiding from the terror of His rod,
A coward's quailing for a righteous sentence.

For it is then, and only then, the Father
Can meet His child, such as it left His home,
Bestow the kiss of pardon and the love

Of ring and raiment from His treasure trove,
And bid him to the Palace with Him come,
There with the tranquil spirits ever gather.

Sordino now, like Israel of old,
Passed through the inner struggle with the Lord,
Until the morning of his soul appeared,
And with the light of victory him cheered,
The brook of bitter weeping he did ford,
And found beyond the comfort of God's fold.

XXXV

Deem it not strange that men of deeper thought,
Retired to solitudes of woods and mountains,
Where, by a life of pray'r and contemplation,
They strove to find the soul's complete salvation,
And drink of heaven's unpolluted fountains,
And comprehend what God for man hath wrought.

The solitude, in which the hermit dwelt,
Was deep and undisturbed by human strife,
No sound was heard but nature's matchless tones,
Its song, the cry, the sigh, the wandering moans,
Which lift the poet's vision to a life,
That has no language, but alone is felt.

Such quiet is a balm for wretched minds,
A cooling water to the soul athirst;
Sordino drank it like the cup of grace,
In which you see the Saviour's crownèd face,
God spoke to him, not as to Cain accurst,
But as a father, in the whispering winds.

XXXVI

Towards eve, that day, arrived his faithful aid,
Who after stealthy search had found a ship
For Ireland bound, to sail that very night;
And in the dark, before the moon rose bright,
They might into its hiding safely slip,—
The captain willing to be doubly paid.

So, as the dusk grew on, the kindly dusk,—
Which like a mother's weeping love embraces
Her guilty child, to pardon, shield and hide,
Close to her breast, where nothing shall betide
Him but the shelter from the cruel faces
Of an avenging world,—he rose to busk

With his companions, yet, ere he took leave,
He prayed the hermit's blessing on his soul,
Then put a golden pound within his palms,
The hermit thanked him for his gen'rous alms,
Then blessed him with the cross, yea, blessed them
all,
And bid them fare in hope, and not to grieve.

Then they departed to a little boat,
Hid in a wooded nook upon the river,
And in the darkness for the ship set out,
And Quinn, who plied the oars, did make the route,
Without a blunder, to the "Guadalquivir,"—
As proud a galleon as was afloat.

XXXVII

When man has lost the moorings of his home,
And on the sea of life is tossed about,

Bereft of childhood's anchorage of heart,
Nor wife, nor child have in his life a part,
Then cares he little for the farewell shout,
And sometimes little whither he may roam.

Not so with children, when the evening-star,
In the cerulean, like mother-eye,
Sends forth its heavenly gleam of love and peace,—
The longing for the home doth then increase,
And from the soul goes up a bitter cry
To be with those so dear, but so afar.

Sordino's page stood at the railing, as
The ship bore down the Thames, that star-lit night,
And none did mark the tears that trickled fast,
And none did see the glances which he cast
Towards the home which was his soul's delight,
While farther, farther from it he did pass.

Sordino missed him, sitting in the hold,
And asked his new-found friend to bring him down,
And as he came and stood in the dim glow
Of candle-light, at once with pain he saw
The redness of his eyes, so large and brown,
And felt his hands, that they were strangely cold.

And he did put his arm around his neck,
And lowly spoke with tenderness and cheer,
That he should see again the home he loved,
And him with goodly promises endowed
Of favors that would make each coming year
As carefree as the sailors on the deck.

XXXVIII

The sea attracts the soul that deeply yearns
For freedom and adventure, like the iron
Which is by magnet drawn; and so it be,
That 'mongst the cruder natures one may see
The dreamer's eye of Masefield or a Byron,
Or wit and humor of a Robert Burns.

And sailors love to sing, or tell a tale,
Songs set to music by the wave and wind,
And yarns with tang and laughter of the deep,
And on a day when all things seem asleep
In golden calm, you best may find
The squatting crew itself of these avail.

On such a day a sailor-lad did sing
A little lay which to Sordino's page
Had spirit-flight, as never he had known,
It was to him the lifting of a dawn
From night's and sorrow's dark and fearful cage,
The skylark's rise and soar on raptured wing.

“Adieu, my native land, adieu,
I leave thee for a while,
As fade thy cliffs amid the blue,
And trembling of thy smile!
I sing my parting song with tears,
But not as cravens do,
Thy love casts out the coward's fears
And leaves a courage true.”

“For England's sons did ever find
Their strength in love of thee,

Thy name, a lode-star to their mind,
Guides o'er the stormy sea;
They breathe it as the lover does
Her's whom he most adores;
And where the English standard goes
Her name lights up the shores."

"There is a land far in the west,
Bright with the sun-set's glow,
Arising from the billow's crest,
With mountain-peaks of snow,
With palms and roses in the vales,
And fountain-gleams among,
And rich as any fairy-tale,
In gold and fruit and song."

"And men have sailed the weary leagues
To find this wondrous realm,
Have spurned the danger and fatigues,
And waves that overwhelm,
To reach that land, but none returned
To England from his quest,
Unless his heart within him burned
With thanks for what is best."

"For English isles is Paradise
To every native child,
Since things more precious he doth price
Than riches of the wild,
The gold of love is more than all,
And faith more rare than gems,
He heeds not the alluring call
And glittering diadems."

“He loves his land, he loves his God,
Be riches what they may,
The bleeding Christ upon the rood
Protects him on his way,
And meets he luck, as it may hap
To any sailor boy,
He brings it to his mother’s lap,
Her thanks, his greatest joy.”

“Adieu, adieu, my native land,
Adieu, my father’s home,
Adieu my lass, O, may thy hand
Greet me when back I come!
For sailor’s heart, when outward bound,
Is filled with sorrow’s pain,
But hope lies glimm’ring on the sound—
Of coming home again.”

XXXIX

The song was ended, and the crew’s applause
Did please the lad, who sang it to his lute.—
The midshipman then essayed to relate
A story with a mystery and fate,
Of queen in English castle, and a brute
Whom she did love, her absent, heartless spouse.

But while he spake, the captain did appear,
(Unfinished hung the story on the lips),
A Spaniard would not let such story pass,
Since holy was his monarch, though an ass;
Castilian, yea, to the finger-tips,
Who for his God and king had equal fear.

But all his crew was English and did pity,
Though not from love, their queen of grief and rage,
The most unfortunate on any throne,
Who languished in her palace sad and lone,
A zealot for her faith, who dared to wage
A final fight for the Eternal City.

Her love for Philip was a tragedy,
Of whom the people spake and lent it hue
Of fateful romance and a mystery;
Yea, in the night strange phantoms men did see
Of things the superstitious counted true,
But round it all clung native sympathy.

The captain becked Sordino to his side,
And spoke in accents, foreign to his men,
On whom a silence fell deep as the sea's,
When, lo! there rose a curling little breeze,
And then another stronger than its friend,
Who called on Neptune's horses for a ride.

The captain bid the men to tend the sails,
And quickly did each sailor now respond;
The sheets were spread before the rising wind,
And swiftly did they leave the coast behind,
To reach the vast and sunlit mere beyond,
Where ocean billows surge with piercing wails.

XL

Sordino's mind sank into gloomy night,
As time grew heavy with a voyage long;
He brooded on the past, and as he did,

It seemed that shadows all its sunshine hid;
And sickness, too, did make the man, once strong,
Feel aged, worthless, and in awful plight.

The story by the midshipman did linger
Upon his heart, increasing spectral-like,
Awaking sympathy, for he did see
In Mary's life the gathered misery
Of many storms which 'gainst her soul did strike,
And on a dark and hopeless deep did bring her.

The greatest souls must bear the greatest pain,
And sometimes sweetness turns to bitterness,
And they who for the heights have been appointed,
And by the gods or fates have been anointed,
Must know the "Welt-smertz" of the vintage press,
And tread it all alone, may be in vain.

Thus did he meditate, and pleasure found
In philosophic musings, day by day;
But this was unknown to the hardy crew,
Who melancholy with their laughter slew,
They liked him not, and wished him out of way,—
Well that he had the captain to him bound.

Alas, to him the Chimes of life were lost!
And that they ever rang seemed but a dream;
The boist'rous elements of sea and air
Enveloped him, but little did he care,
Since death itself a friend to him did seem,—
Of all things weary, sick and tempest-tost.

But in such hours, whene'er the boy drew near,
Whom he did love, a light shone in his eyes,

And he did speak to him so tenderly
As any parent, which did set him free
From painful broodings and the low'ring skies,
And mid the deepest darkness brought him cheer.

XLI

'Tis not our aim to tell of voyage long,
Of storms and struggles on the wintry seas,
Of harbourage and waiting in its course,
Mid sheltered inlets upon Ireland's shores,
Though full of hardship, yet it would not please,
And we must draw to close our lengthy song.

But I have seen full many a ship depart,
Receding into dimness gray and cold,
Then slip away, lost in a mighty void ;—
And in my musings I have tugged and toyed
With memories of friends, or what they told,
In words that strayed from an unguarded heart.

For “wise words” are, sometimes, but foolish mumb-
ling,
And critic’s arrogance a dark conceit,
While silence often has the truest depth ;
But when the child, which in thy bosom slept,
Awakes to speak, a morning light doth greet
The restless trav’ler in his painful stumbling.

For there are seas, and many a distant shore,
And life is but a journey and a fight,
Amid the mighty elements at war ;—
But by-and-by the pilgrimage is o’er,
And when the peaceful harbor is in sight,

Love's word alone can ope the Palace-door.

XLII

Upon an April morn the ship emerged
From fitful seas into the placid pool
Of Limerick. The day was clear and calm,
And nature drew the breath of spring, its balm
Was tempering the breezes, somewhat cool,
From western realms, where ocean-billows surged.

The woods and lanes stood draped in flimsy veil,
Of hues most delicate; a purple shade
Uniting with a tender touch of green,
While here and there a golden glint was seen
Of butter-cups upon the sloping glade,
Or round the ponds, where fleecy clouds did sail.

The skylark, lavishing its melody
Upon the freedom of the airy height,
Did carol from the lofty blue so long,
That not of earth but heaven seemed its song,
An Ariel amid the dazzling light,
Who thrilled the heart of man with ecstasy.

Sordino harkened to this happy flood
Of music, and he saw his servant boy
Gaze upward, like the holy men that day,
When Christ ascended, for it did allay
His sorrows, and like theirs, restore his joy,
Since skylark song is in the English blood.

For have not Wordsworth and great Shelley proven
That none it stirs just like the British heart,

To whom the lark gave immortality,
When it inspired them with its poesy,
And made their odes the acme of their art,
Creations from Apollo's texture woven?

Sordino's mind, however, at that hour,
Lacked the repose which was on land and sea;
And without mood no music doth arrest,—
For by an eagerness he was possest,
To know in truth if this the shore might be,
Which held his treasure in Cathedral tower.

The fire of his Italian blood awoke,
Though he had aged so much upon this journey,
He longed to leave the ship, and pass along
The river, which was famous made in song,
By the immortal Moore, and quaint Mahoney,
Whose "Shannon Bells" remain a master-stroke.

Sordino's wish, to be the first to land,
Was granted, and a boat placed to his service,
Manned by two sailors and the monk and page,
The former only did the oars engage;
Sordino, in the stern, sat like a dervise,
In musings deep, with head posed on his hand.

No finer vista could itself unfold
Than that which burst upon his dreamy eye,
As full in view the city did appear,
A sight which drew from weary hearts a tear,—
A city glimmering twixt sea and sky,
With citadels and shrines, even then, so old.

The sailors left off rowing and gave way
To dreaming on the scene, until a spell

Possest them all, and silent did they rest
Upon the river's calm, translucent breast,
When all at once the clear tone of a bell
Came floating softly o'er the tranquil bay.

And then a hymn of praise rose up to heaven
From bells whose tongues had notes beyond compare,
Sordino's chimes—when on his ears they fell,
He knew such happiness which none can tell,
And angel hands to Paradise did bear
The soul who for true harmony had striven.

As riveted he sat with empty stare,
Even when the soul had from its temple fled ;
The boy did note it first and gave a cry,
It was to him as if his sire did die ;
The monk did say a prayer o'er the dead,
And bid the sailors to the city fare.

They buried him within the hallowed pale
Of the Cathedral, that the Chimes might sound
Their daily dirge above the master's grave,
Who for their music life and fortune gave,
Who with their mystery his fate had bound,
A lonely pilgrim through a gloomy vale.

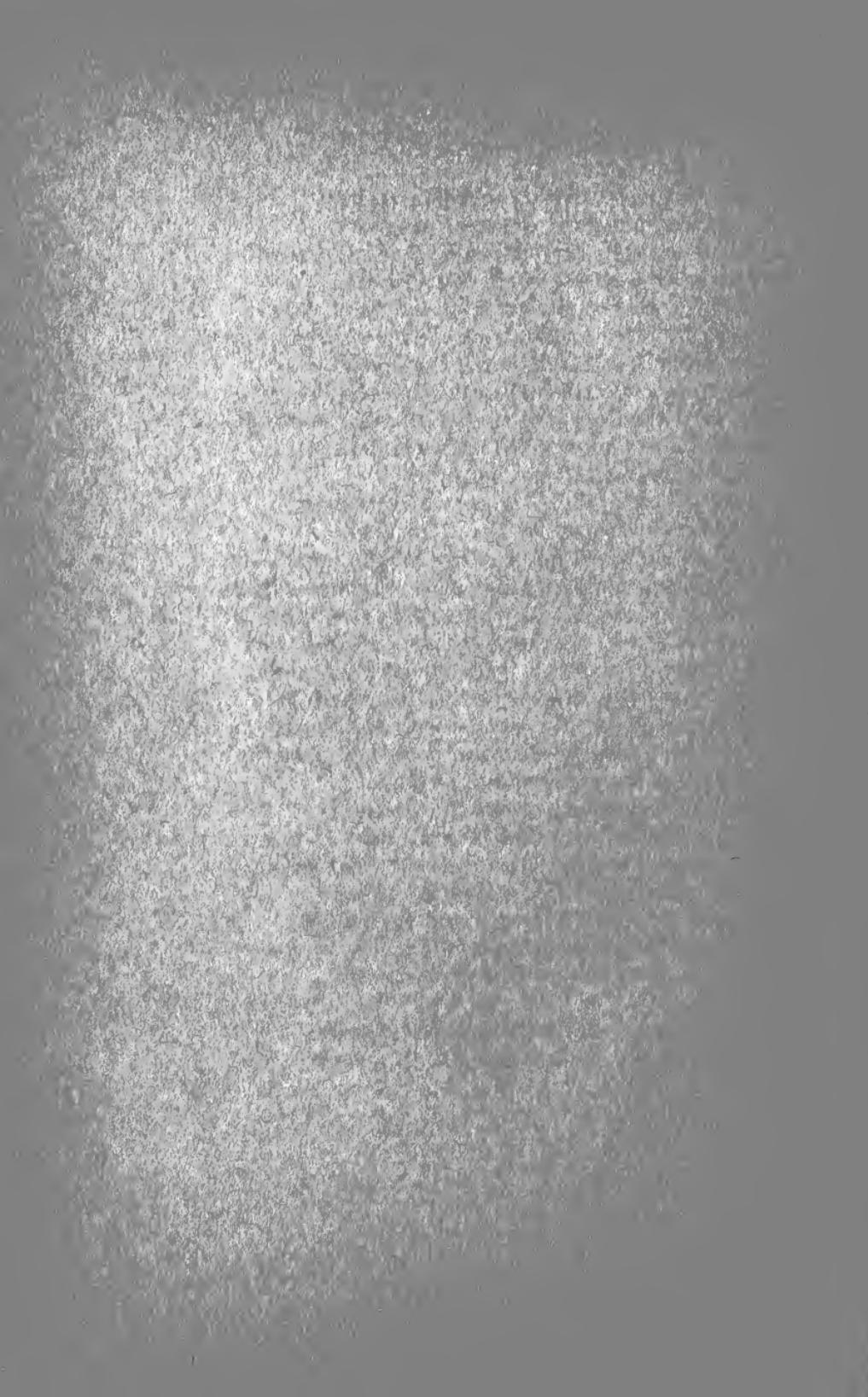
His sacrifice, howe'er, was not in vain,
And not amiss his oft belittled quest,
His poet's mantle fell upon the lad,
To whom his substance he bequeathéd had,—
A singer he became, among the best,
With cadence of the Chimes in lyric strain.

And through his faith the faithless was restored,
The quondam monk became a godly priest,
Who humbly made the message of the bells,
A life of peace where discord often dwells,
To tell of this strange man he never ceast,
Since he his name and memory adored.

And on the Danube, in her father's hall,
Sat Stella, sorrowing her youth away,
The people said, it was for her dead lover;
But none did know, and none did e'er discover
The secret of her heart, until one day,
Her father heard her on Sordino call.



THE SIBYL'S PROPHECY



THE SIBYL'S PROPHECY

Amid a vale in Norway stands a church,
An ancient building, on historic ground ;
Its massive walls are white like newfall'n snow,
Its lofty spire seems golden in the sun ;
Around it mighty elm-trees spread their boughs
And throw their shadows on the moss-grown graves,
And crumbling monuments of centuries,
Their music blending with the jack-daw's cry
And with the deep, pure tones of bells, whose sound
Reecho 'mong the wooded hills and dells,
Awaking fancies of the Saga-age :
Of royal bards who sang before their king,
That early morning of the fatal day,
When Olaf 'neath his standard of the cross
Fought pagan armies from those sloping heights,
And lost his cause ! The altar has been built
Above the stone, he leaned against, while flowed
His precious life-blood from the cruel wounds ;
The ground was consecrated by his blood,
And when the people understood, and bowed
Before the Christ whose saint they slew, they built
A chapel on the place of martyrdom,
Which in succeeding ages was enlarged,
Until a worthy monument stood forth.
The ravages of time have wrought their change,
But it is ne'ertheless the trysting place
Between the valley's people and their God,
A place which links the present to the past—
And heaven's gates to Norway's history.

* * * * *

On parchment, dim with age, a chronicle,
Two cycles old, was found within a chest,

Amid the iron-coffins in the vaults
Below the church, which learnèd parsons read,
And then restored it to its resting-place.
For some strange reason then the narrow door
Was closed up with a solid masonry ;
But on the people's lips, from age to age,
The legend of that chronicle has passed,
And I relate it here as told to me,
When but a boy, by my great grandmother.—
One day, the legend says, the parish priest,
A young and pious man, came to the church,
To read the mass for a departed friend,
When he beheld a lonely woman stand
Within the shadow of a mountain-ash,
Which spread its crown of green and red beside
The gate which led into the sacred place.
Her hair was black as night, her eyes a deep
Of melancholy mystery and dreams ;
Her chiselled features had the striking charm
Of youthful beauty and a mind mature ;
She was unlike the women of the vale,
A stranger whom the priest had never met ;
And he espied her with a sense of fear.
Her sable garb and downcast mien betrayed
A state of grief, wherefore the kindly man,
Led by a heartfelt sympathy, did ask
What great bereavement weighed upon her soul,
To which she answered : "Sir, I sorrow not
For any one within this hallowed ground,
Nor elsewhere for the dead ; but for this church
I grieve, when I behold how it is doomed
To dire destruction"—here she paused and sighed.
Now he surmised she was the prophetess,

The sibyl whose renown had come to him,
And therefore asked that she would further tell
About her vision of the things to be.
"I see two saplings, of the mountain ash,
Grow up, one on each side of this thy church,
I also see a breach made in the wall,
And when the saplings have grown up to meet—
As mighty trees above the chancel-roof,
And when the rent shall grow sufficient wide
To be the hiding of a prayer book,
Then shall the church sink down and be no more."
Then quote the priest, with frown upon his face:
"The house built on a rock can never sink."
"But what is built on sand the floods destroy,"
The sibyl said, and quickly went away.

* * * * *

Into the church the parson passed, and knelt
Before the altar in an earnest prayer,
That God would have great mercy on the soul
Of his departed friend whose earthly life
Had been cut off in a most tragic way;
His widow now bestowing on the church
Rich offerings—atonements for his deeds
Of sinfulness—outweighing charity;
And while he prayed, he seemed to hear the cry
And groaning of the soul, from out the fire
Of purgatory; supplications strong
Ascended to the mercy-seat of God
From humble altar-steps, until he felt,
The soul was loosed in heaven as on earth.
Departing from the church, he looked about
For that strange, mournful face; but she was gone.
Then came a thought to him, a memory

Of something which the baron him had told :
How on a summer's day, while on a hunt,
He met a maiden in a forest glen,
A slender girl of beauty, such as he
Had seldom seen—of Oriental cast,
Who weeping told him of his fate most dire,
That fire should him consume, a prophesy
So terribly fulfilled, and now, perchance,
The very same had prophesied to him ;
This thought possessed his mind, as home he strode,
With dark forbodings of impending doom.

* * * * *

It was a Sunday, in the month of June,
A morn of most bewitching summer-charms ;
The air was charged with fragrance of the trees,
Of blooming cherry trees, and glist'ning birch,
Of mountain ash and tow'ring balsam trees,
Of hazel-wood and prickly juniper,
Of alder trees along the winding brooks,
Of mountain forest of the pungent pine ;
Of thousand flowers in the meads and vales,
An odor sweet—unknown to tropic clime.—
Within God's acre stood the nodding rose
In checkered sunlight, neath the cypress tree,
And greeted every breeze that wandered by.
Groups of the peasant folk were gathering
About the graves, in silent thoughtfulness,
And some in sorrow round the recent mounds ;
The air so calm and mild with fragrance filled,
The tolling of the church bells deep and strong,
Made this a day of sweet solemnity,
Felt by the aged and the youth alike ;
And while they lingered, lo, the sibyl came.

From group to group a whisper passed with awe:
"It is the sibyl!" Slowly gathering
About her, fearing what she might pronounce,
They gazed upon her pale and mournful face.
"All is but vanity, all things are nought,
All flesh is grass, which flourisheth a while,
Then withers, dies, and mingles with the dust,—
Like leaves upon the trees which now are green,
And full of juice, but in the autumn turn
All sear and yellow, falling to the ground,
Whirled by the chilling blast into a heap,—
And thus must ye return to dust some day,
And all your work must perish, even so;
Yea, even the church must perish on that day,
When crowns of mountain ash trees meet above
The chancel roof, and when the wall receives
Within its rent a common prayer book,
Then shall the earth engulf it, and the pride
Of generations perish in the deep."
Thus spake the sibyl, and the fearful crowd
Displeasure showed by mien and murmuring;
One, much perturbed, essayed to argue thus:
"Thy words, O woman, are but idle talk;
This church, built on such firm and rocky ground,
Can never sink, such prophecy is vain;"
To which she answered with a sigh subdued:
"I've told you only what I've heard and seen
In truest vision of the things to come."
These words were uttered as the last bell rang
Its summons to the Mass, obeyed at once
By all the people, leaving her alone;
And while they prayed, she found a resting-place
Within the cooling shadow of the church,

And listened to a lark that soared on high,
Against the blue of heaven's temple-dome,
And to the chorus 'mongst the sighing trees,
But most of all did note the jack-daws cry,
That melancholy bird of occult hue;
As in a trance she listened to them all,
To thousand voices of a summer's day;
But ere the Mass was ended rose and went
Along a forest path her solitary way.

* * * * *

Then after many years, upon a morn
In early autumn, when the aspen trees
Were turning golden, and the starlings sang
In darkling flocks from meadows shorn and sear,
The pastor took his much accustomed walk,
For he did love to be alone and muse
Upon the wondrous scenes around his home,
And feel great nature's sweet and changing moods.
Although the years had turned his hair to grey,
And robbed his steps of elasticity,
Still was his spirit quite susceptible
To happiness, but more to sorrow's touch,
And on a day like this with feelings mixed,
The sadness of the dying summer won,
And thoughts of life, its purpose and its end
Did occupy his mind as he did meet
The sibyl, by a certain turn of road;
For twenty years he had not seen her face,
And it did startle him to meet her now.
She, too, had changed, and silver locks adorned
Her noble forehead, but her eyes were keen
And piercing, even as in days of youth.
And as she stopped to speak with him, he felt

Their searching glances knew his very soul.
"Long working-day has God ordained for thee",
She said, to which he sadly answered thus:
"My life seems but a transitory dream,
And all its efforts profitless and vain."
"When thou art dust, thy prayer shall be heard,"
She said a-smiling, and passed on her way.
He too moved on, while pondering her words,—
The dark enigma of the prophetess.

* * * * *

The Sibyl's prophecies we thus have heard,
And their fulfilment now we will relate,
Which have their place in ages afterwards.—
The priest as well as prophetess were gone,
And so were generations after them,
Half hidden by the dread oblivion;
The prophecy forgotten;—but a few
Had heard it as an old tradition vague,
A fable only, to which none gave heed,
Though twain ash saplings grew from year to year,
And saw at least two generations pass,
Before their branches met above the church;
A breach also was creeping from the ground
Up through the side-wall's massive masonry,
Increasing with the changes of the years,
Two things which did recall the sibyl's lore,
And led the people to cut down the trees,
To fill the rent and hide it from man's view.
Again they felt assured that all was well,
But from the roots new shoots began to grow
And unmolested through full many years.

* * * * *

For ages had the river sung its song,

A-blending with the church bells' melody ;
May be it was the charm of liquid chimes,
Which drew the river closer year by year,
But almost imperceptibly,
Until one spring it overflowed its banks,
And in a rage, fed by the mountain-streams,
Did wear away the distance from the church,
And forced its course up to the church-yard wall.
A gruesome scene it wrought, as days went by ;
The coffins in the graves began to show,
And bones in sepulchres of old decay ;
Occasionally came a musty skull
A-whirling down the maelstrom of the flood,
And now and then a crash and splash was heard,
When some tall monument did tumble down,
Its name and praise lost in the seething deep,
For nought can man achieve but it is doomed,
At last, to ruin and oblivion.
And mighty trees were undermined and sank
With loads of earth, their branches 'mid the stream,
Like outstretched arms, imploring heav'n for help.
The people also lifted hands in prayer,
For night and day they feared the dreadful hour,
When—as it seemed—the church must be destroyed.
The pastor summoned them to spend a day
In penitence and supplication true.
They came from far and near both old and young,
Yea, even the sick and crippled folk were brought,
That all might help to lift one prayer to heaven,
A common prayer from their humble hearts,
Through him who knelt upon the altar stair,
Whose voice had notes of anguish for his church.
With tears a penitential psalm was sung,

On bended knee; and when again they rose
To leave the place, they passed with downcast heads
Out through the chancel door, beside the which
The old time rent was plainly visible,
And where again the mountain-ash had reached
Above the roof, and met another's crown.
With fear they listened to the water's roar,
(Now only hundred cubits from the church)
And to the moaning of the chilly wind,
Which bare the rainclouds o'er the naked fields.

* * * * *

It was the midnight hour, and densely dark,
In torrents fell the rain, the thunder rolled,
And lurid lightning gleamed across the sky,
Its light revealing nature's misery,
And one lone woman groping 'mongst the graves,
Who sought the church that she too there might
pray,
The only one who at the mid-day mass
Had absent been, for death had kept her home,—
Her husband struggling with the last grim foe.
The struggle being ended, she desired
To share in that great prayer of the day.
For this she stemmed the terror of the night
And spectral fear of sepulchres and shrine;
She found the door unlocked and opened it,
She entered, crossed herself, and sought a pew,
And fervently God's mercy did implore.
Then something strange did happen, for behold,
The church became with dazzling light illumined,
And stranger still, a crowd of people streamed
Through every door, and without footfall sound.
A congregation, not of mundane mien,

But glorious in countenance and dress,
Whose utter silence seemed a breath of praise.
They filled the seats, and by the woman sat;
But to her touch they were as empty space.
Up from the vaults below emerged a band of priests,
Arrayed as in the days when each did serve
Before the altar of this selfsame church;
All knelt; but one ascended to the Host,
An aged man, whose picture still adorned
The gallery, about whose name there clung
The legend of the sibyl's prophecy.
He led them in a supplication strong,
Both for the living and the many dead,
Whose ashes were imperiled by the flood,
And that kind heaven would spare the sacred shrine.
Now *Kyrie Eleison* sang the flock,
With hands outstretched toward burning altar
lights.

While all the ministers exclaimed: Amen!
The woman felt such wondrous happiness,
She thought that she had died and gone to heaven,
Yea, all at once she felt assured of this,
For now she saw her husband, and near him
Two little ones, departed years ago.
She ran with joy to clasp them in her arms,
But they did vanish from her fond embrace;
Yea, all did vanish, even the heavenly lights,
And she stood there alone in darkness gross;
The silence, too, was gone, and now the storm,
Which raged in all its fury, took its place.
A distant rumbling noise was clearly heard,
And then a terror-striking thunder-crash;
The church did tremble in its very depths;

The woman thought the judgment-day had come;
Her strength did fail her, and she swooned away.

* * * * *

When morning o'er the mountain-tops appeared,
There was no cloud to hinder its approach,
And all creation hailed its harbinger:
The first faint blushes of the snowcapped peak;
The raindrops on the grass and upon trees
Soon glittered like innumerable pearls
And diamonds on the bosom of the earth.
The hidden chorus in the woods began
Its songs of praise for the returning calm.
In every home the frightened people 'rose,
And hardly dared to speak what most they feared,—
The church destroyed—and timidly the first
Came to behold the ruins of the night;
But when they saw the church still standing there,
They ran to tell the people and the priest,
Who came with joy and found it even so.
A miracle, it seemed, had taken place:
The raging flood had wholly disappeared,
Its empty channel bearing witness to
How great and terrible had been its pow'r.
A mighty landslide from the mountain side
Had changed its course back to an ancient bed,
And what the people thought the dreadful noise
Of their beloved sanctuary's fall,
Was of the rushing, rumbling earthen slide.
How great was now their joy, when they perceived,
That God had heard their prayer and spared His
house!
With praise the priest across the threshold stepped,
And many followed gladly after him,

To join in common, heartfelt gratitude;
But suddenly an unexpected scene
Possessed their souls and filled them with alarm:
Before the altar steps a woman lay,
Stark dead, it seemed, for cold and pale was she,
And for a moment all did hesitate
To touch her, thinking she was surely dead,—
A moment—only this, for soon the priest
Had ascertained that life was not extinct,
And altar-wine helped to resuscitate;
Now slowly she emerged from deadly swoon,
And gaining consciousness at last could tell,
Why she had come to be in such a place,
And all the things which she had heard and seen,
Of phantom congregation and its mass,
Of priests in strange array before the Host.
They marvelled greatly at her narrative,
When said the pastor: “I believe forsooth
The spirits of the dead have worshiped here,
Joined in the prayers of their living friends,
And now a legend, clust’ring ’round the name
Of him whose picture you have pointed out,
Comes to my mind, the sibyl’s prophecy:
“When thou art dead, thy prayer shall be heard.”

ELEGIACS

IN MEMORIAM

Judge Gorham Powers, Died April 15, 1915.

I

The flowers lie faded on his mound,
The rose and lily are decayed;
The stam'ring words of praise, we said,
Did vanish almost with their sound.

The throng that stood around his bier,
Is scattered in accustomed ways;
And now and then a neighbor says:
"This was the saddest of the year."

Alas, if this was all we gave;
Then were our eulogies a shame;
Unworthy of his noble name,
A mockery around his grave.

II

A month has passed, and April showers
Have come and gone upon the scene;
The fields are turning deeper green,
And leaves are growing into bowers.

The butter-cup and violet
Appear among old leaves and grass,
The Iris stands where runnels pass
Into the larger rivulet.

The meadow-lark sings in the fields,
The thrush chants in the willow-hedge,
And mid the marsh and from the sedge
The blackbirds merry music peals.

Thus spring has conquered winter's gloom
The spring, we hoped would give him strength,
Its life increase his journey's length,
Even though a little from the tomb.

III

But in our heart something begins
To stir, and grow, and take a shape,
It flings away the dismal crape,
And o'er our lamentation wins.

It is a flower of rarest hue,
Belonging to Eternity,—
The blossom of the memory
Of what in him was good and true.

With this we will his grave adorn,
In summer-sun and winter's frost,
Its beauty never shall be lost,
But growing brighter with each morn.

IV

'Tis evening, and the clouds hang low,
The rain has fall'n the livelong day,
But in the west there is a ray,
A gentle gleam of evening-glow.

Down are the curtains and the shades,
Where hearts in silence weep and brood,
They nature's sadness may exclude,
But also that one gleam—which fades.

I would that she might see it now,
That which was once her soul's delight,
That it could meet her tearful sight,
From o'er the verdant hillock's brow.

It would, indeed, be rude to say,
To those around the cheerless hearth,
"Arise, and smile, let grief depart,
Forget the clouds which gloomed the day."

For sorrow, like a swollen stream,
Must have its course, or break its bounds,
And oft its bitterness redounds
To joy, of which we did not dream.

But that sweet sunset seems to say,
"He was a good man, and a just,"
You best can honor him by trust
In Him who leads us day by day."

V

The maple and the apple-trees,
Around his home, are blossoming,
There is the hum of insects' wings,
The droning of the honey-bees.

This is the season, he loved best,—
To labor in his garden-plot,

To prune the trees that flourished not,—
This was to him a pleasant rest.

For he from youth was nature's child,
He loved unfeigned simplicity,
He found it in the field and tree,
In bird and beast, the tame and wild.

He found it in the "common" folk,
He loved them, they loved him again,
He was the poor and needy's friend,
His feeding tramps became a joke.

For it is told, both near and far,
How he the tramp led to his board,
To all the best it could afford,
Then offered him a choice cigar.

Forgive a smile amid the tear,
The simple hearts will understand,
And bless the kind, unstinted hand,
Which gave to them new hope and cheer.

The apple trees send out their sweet,
The purple pomp of maples droop,
They stand alone, they stand in group,
And wait in vain their lord to greet.

VI

The morning lifts its saffron veil,
And smiles with happiness replete,
With Sabbath peace it doth us greet,
And with the risen Lord's "All Hail!"

It mingles with the mellow sound
Of church bells calling man to prayer,
It falls upon the altar-stair,
Where souls disconsolate are found.

No more along the aisles shall move
His stately figure, cloth in black,
On days when other folk seemed slack
In the expression of their love.

Not to repeat a senseless creed,
Did he the house of God attend,
But none like he his ear did lend,
To truth of heart and human need.

He was a seeker after truth,
Pursuing it on flights of thought,
His mind to keenness had been wrought
By constant study, even from youth.

He loved the truth in thought and life,
He hated sham and cunning cant,
And had a scornful smile for rant,
Whose purpose was to gender strife.

The Protestant and Catholic
He judged alike from human view,
Both were his friends, if only true,
The false alone a heretic.

No honest Faith he e'er did scorn,
But saw the human heart in all,
The upward reaching of the soul,
The waiting for a better morn.

Though he with Burns did sometimes laugh
While reading "Holy Willie's Prayer,"
Or satires, like the "Holy Fair,"
Or "Holy Willie's Epitah."

For when we cease to fear and dread
The phantoms of a darker age,
We read them like a comic page,
And smile to think that they are dead.

The darkness from man's faith cast out,
And truth and love alone its good,
Then he shall know that brotherhood,
God's greatest prophets speak about.

Then man the Father's heart shall know,
The "larger Hope" and nobler meed,
Then shall his life be one grand creed,
The measure of what he doth trow.

Was this his faith? He never told,
Except in modest daily deeds,
He said no prayers, nor counted beads,
Yet was he one of God's true fold.

VII

There moves along the street and lane
A motley crowd of old and young;
The nation's anthem has been sung,
A homily preached at the fane.

It moves along to sound of fife
And muffled drum, the step to aid;

The flag is to the breezes laid,
A flag which bears the marks of strife.

These men who carried it on high,
Amid the battle's great array,
But feebly follow it to-day
To where their fallen comrades lie.

“He must increase, but I decrease,”
Thus spake the prophet long ago,
“Old Glory” has been strengthened so,
“The boys in blue” may rest in peace.

And one by one is mustered out,
From ranks which ever thinner grow,
Soon but a remnant we shall know,
A remnant in the North and South.

So let us plant our flag and flow'r
Upon their grave, in Memory,—
Of what they were—what we should be,
In this the larger, newborn hour.

But most of all, let us be kind
To these who linger yet a while,
Come, walk with them the last long mile,
And carry those who fall behind!

VIII

He was a member of this post,
Lieutenant of artillery,
Great Lincoln's gift for bravery,
Of which you never heard him boast.

At Cedar Mountain and at Reams,
Antietam and the Wilderness,
Cold Harbor, with its vain distress,
And Petersburg's dark bloody streams,

He knew the brunt of bitter fight,
The hardship and the painful wound,
He knew the cost of conquered ground,
The price of freedom and of right.

He knew, indeed, that "war is hell,"
And did not proudly speak of it,
Although his eyes were strangely lit,
When campfire stories he did tell.

But peace was regnant in his soul,
He dreamed about that distant day,
When man shall know the better way,
Of peace on earth, good will to all.

He read with sorrow of the war,
Which Europe's mighty nations wage,
To him it seemed an insane rage,
Which e'en a soldier must deplore.

It cast a shadow o'er his mind
To think that progress is so slow,
That highest life is still so low
Among the foremost of mankind.

His peace increased, as strength declined,
The world's sad plight he keenly felt,
And human hope he clearly spelt,
In Peace alone, with Truth entwined.

IX

The silver clouds move lazily,
Beneath a sky so high and blue,
And seem to touch the distant view
Of our mid-summer scenery.

They are like dreams of other days,
Of life that was and is no more,
Except upon another shore,
Beyond the sun's prismatic rays.

They hang above the peaceful town,
They brood above the courthouse tower,
Like blessings on the morning hour,
And on the judgments there set down.

Beneath the lawyer's able brief,
Beneath the arguments set forth,
Beneath the rulings of the court,
There is a silent, manly grief.

The thoughts of him, who for so long
Did hold the chair within this hall,
Leap from his portrait on the wall,
To men whose hearts are true and strong.

It seems so strange, he is not there,
To guide them with his light of law,
Who seldom failed the right to know,
Whose judgments were both just and fair.

Whose mind cut keenly through the maze
Of subtlest labyrinth of guilt,

Who undeceived by lawyer's tilt,
Pursued serenely logic's ways.

Was justice clear,—his heart was more,
He pitied, where the law was plain,
And but for duty, he had fain,
Forgiv'n where sorrow did implore.

X

A year is gone, again the spring
Returns in tender verdure clad,
The little children's hearts are glad,
And robins in the maple sing.

A boy is playing with the rim
Of some discarded carriage-wheel,
A large and rusty rim of steel,
Which on the lawn lends sport to him.

To me it speaks of circling years,
Of circling Providence and Fate,
And the return of this sad date,
The day of loss and bitter tears.

"Let children play" I heard him say,
"The cares of life will come full soon;"
The sun is dancing with the moon,
At the beginning of the day.

I hear a child sing a refrain,
A song his mother sings full oft,
The laddie's voice is clear and soft,
An anodyne for sorrow's pain.

I see another munching bread,
It seems much sweeter in the free,
Beneath the budding apple-tree,
With soaring April clouds o'er head.

Clouds growing denser and more dark;
The rain begins to spot the ground,
There is a gleam, and then a sound,
Which make the children stop and hark.

And one is crying out in fear,
And all are skurrying for home;
O, well for him to whom doth come
Its comfort, when the storms appear!

XI

Whose carriage, drawn by sable span,
Stops at the long deserted home?
It is his dear ones who have come,—
The daughters of a noble man;—

And she whose life was one with his,—
Whose love transcends the bounds of death,—
Comes with a rose-boquet's sweet breath,
To greet his mem'ry with a kiss.

The heavens weep, and true hearts weep,
And in the house is evening-gloom,
They stand together in the room,
Where he this hour did fall asleep.

Then pass into the world again,
From sorrow's holy sacrament;—

To one, who lingered near, it lent,
Abiding greetings from his friend.

XII

White clover studs the velvet lawn,
And fancy forms a monument
Of marble-frieze, a tracing blent
With emerald and rosy dawn.

The carved stone is for the eye
Of passers by, who needs be told,
In characters and numbers bold,
His name; when born; when he did die.

To those who love, the strolling breeze
Is kindly whispering his name,
And who can tell from where it came,
Or whither all its music flees?

O'er those the flowers cast a spell,
The dream of a midsummer night,
And with their shapes and hues, delight
Bring forth his name in mead and dell.

And sprightly, as from Elfin coast,
There comes the boy he loved so well,
His eyes and locks and forehead tell,
He is his grandsire's child the most.

The clover-blossoms, white as snow,
Attract his eye, as they do mine,
We gather them and lightly twine
A garland for his comely brow.

Such wreath put round his tresses dark,
Gives godlike aspect to the lad;
He laughs and runs, his heart is glad,
With gladness of a soaring lark.
I heard thee say, when life did slope:
"Man is immortal in his race;"
And now I see thee in this face,
So radiant, so full of hope.

THE FAREWELL

In Memoriam Frank J. Cressy, M. D.

'Twas here, where slopes the hill into the vale,
With many a roof and tow'r and heav'ward spire,
And rows of lofty elms,—that wan and pale
He gazed upon the sunset and its fire,
Which glowed in sky and river, on the green
And curving hills and far-off hazy plain;
The early summer was upon the scene—
All fresh and verdant after days of rain—
He looked upon it all with wistful eye,
His life's arena ere he went to die.

What thoughts came to him then I do not know,
But seldom man was granted better place
To take farewell with everything below,
And look into the Father's smiling face,—
For nature's Vesper, glorious with light,
Held sweet communion with the days of yore,
And blessed the deeds of service and the right,
The things that vanish not, forevermore;
And saw he this, then had his last adieu
No painful pang, but rather, that he knew,
The morrow of that evening would be fair,

And rich in great and good realities,
Though, like all pilgrims, he wist hardly where
The homeland looms with bright felicities.

With Cato he believed "it must be so."
That this strange sojourn is not all in vain,
And that somewhere the longing soul shall know
The meaning of the journey's toil and pain,
And find the quest for which he daily strove,
Embodyed in the light of truth and love.

He said farewell to friends of many years,
As sank the sun behind the farthest ridge,
And chilly shadows came with darksome fears
To those who homeward turned, across the bridge;
And he passed on with that which ne'er I see
Without the feeling of a mystery,—
The train of life, the unknown destiny,
The ardent hopes, the crushing misery
It bears along, as with a magic speed,—
The wonder of the age, the country's iron-steed.

And in its speed was hope, for at the end
Stood Skill and Wisdom to prolong his life,
And with him fared a kind and trusted friend,
And more than all, his e'er devoted wife,
But Skill and Love's most consecrated aid
Could not prolong a life—that was complete,
And like a man, the last great toll he paid,
Unfaltering, his God and Judge to meet.

But we, who took his hand upon this slope,
With parting words, have in this fitting frame
Of nature placed his life of work and hope,

And writ upon it all his honored name,
A name that lives in grateful memories
Of those to whom he gave his ministries.

BABY BRUCE

I see her kneeling at the mound
Of baby Bruce,
And placing on the turfless ground
Sweet flow'rs, profuse,
I see the pearls of bitter tears
Fall on their leaves;
Alas, that one in tender years
So sorely grieves!

Yes, he was fairer than the flow'rs
Of rarest hue,
His smile sweet as the morning hour's
Gleam in the dew,
And as we looked into his eyes
So large and brown,
It seemed an angel from the skies
Had just come down.

What heaven gave, again it took—
Its ways are good,
But now in pity it does look
On motherhood,—
Whose love so young, so pure, so deep,
Eats sorrow's bread,—
And whispers: "Woman do not weep,
He is not dead."

A FUNERAL OF A CHILD ON CHRISTMAS EVE

The dusk was upon hill and wood,
Upon the fields of soft new snow,
The pine-trees in God's acre stood,
With branches laden, bending low,
And marble shaft and monument,
Like mystic, beings draped and pale,
Seemed listening to the bells that sent
Their Christmas greeting through the vale.

Around an open, little grave
There stood a group of weeping folk;
"The Lord hath taken what he gave,
We sorrow not as without hope,
For he who gave us Christmas eve
Said: 'Let the children come to me,
Of such the kingdom is,' they live,
With him in joy eternally."

Thus spake the minister of God,
But still the parent's heart did sob,
And when they heaped the frozen clod,
He felt that heav'n his hope did rob,
Congealing tears did cease to fall,
And thicker, denser grew the gloom,
The church-bell's clang jarred on his soul,
He wished that grave for him had room.

THE WREATH

How shall I shake off the darkness,
The nightmare that feeds on my soul?—
I looked through the windows this morning,
Upon the embankments of snow,
That ridged to the porch of my dwelling,
And covered its floor,
Where a half buried branch of an ever-green rested,
Torn from a discarded Christmas-tree,
Back of the church;—
The terrible wind of the night
Had cut it and carried it thither,
Where in the white, like a wreath it protruded its
green,
A wreath for the dead,
Whose soul mid the storm of the night
Had taken its flight.—
O, God, how utterly eerie it seemed
To my mind that had worried alone
Through the vigils of night!
And on that day came the message,
That she was no more.

LINES WRITTEN ON RECEIVING NEWS OF MY FATHER'S DEATH

I sit alone in evening-gloom,
The night is cold, and shrill the wind,
I make a church out of my room,
To find some solace for the mind.

Oft have I spoken mid the throngs
Of such who pitied the bereaved,
Oft have I listened to the songs
Which other burdened hearts relieved.

But with my grief I am alone,
Far from the scene of those who weep,
Within the old ancestral home,
Beyond the ocean's stormy deep.

I have his picture at my right,
I have it clearer in my heart,
For blurred and darkened is the sight,
And rays of mortal day depart.

* * * * *

Thou wert so strong, so brave, so true,
I looked to thee, as boy and youth,
My life did take from thee its hue
In whatsoe'er it has of truth.

Thy toil, thy suffering, and love,
The love of home and native land,
So strangely clear come to me now,
Like blessings of an honest hand.

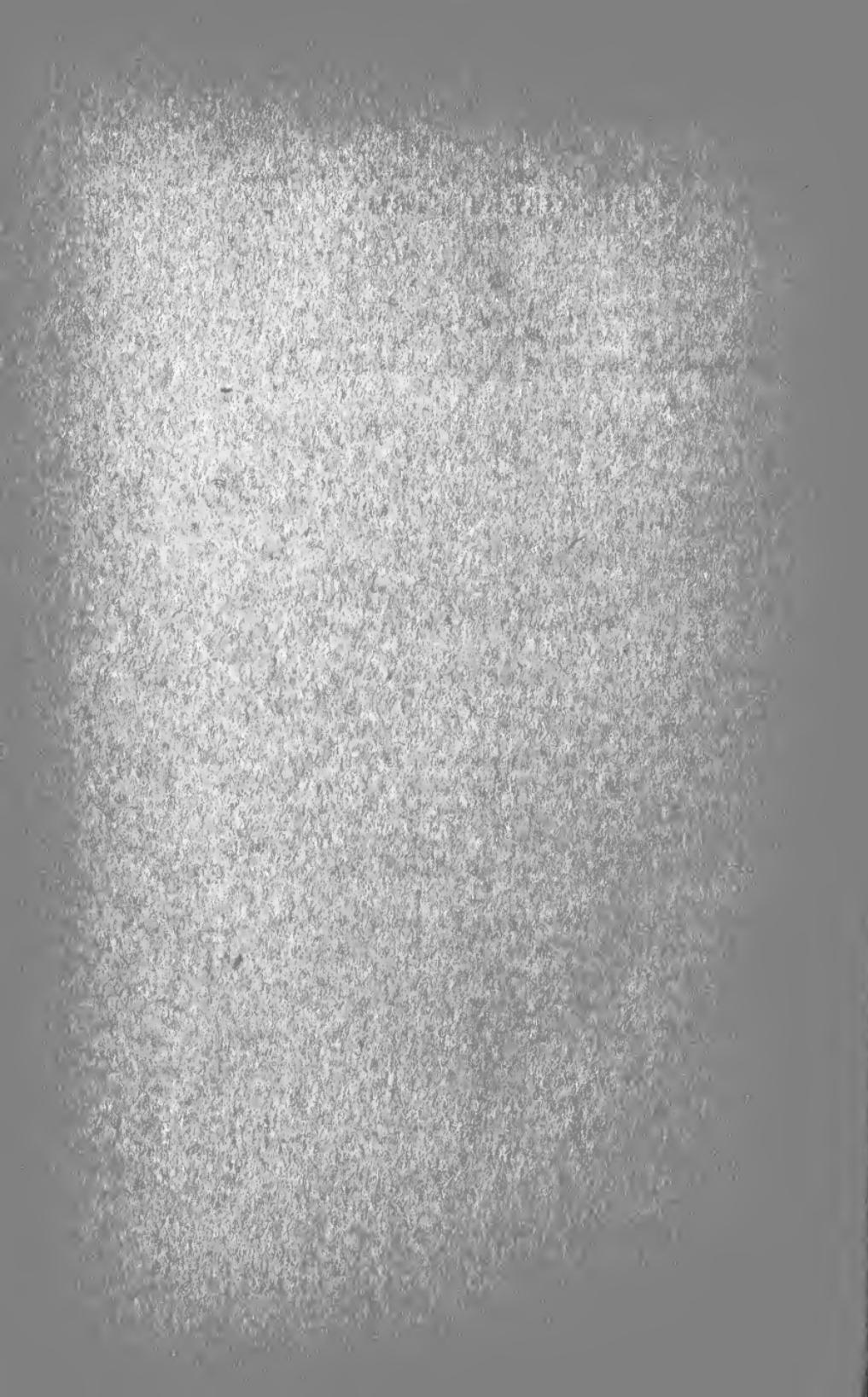
Thou saidst to me: "I will not leave
The land wherein thy mother rests;"
How could I seek thy heart to grieve
With all this new world's varied quests?

Farewell, I may not see the place,
Where they have laid thee by her side,
But memories of vanished days,
Shall ever dear with me abide.

The distance would not let me lay
A garland on thy sable bier,
Therefore this wreath, a simple lay,
Fresh with the dew of many a tear.

I'll weave out of my heart a wreath
Of flowers which e'er shall blossom there,—
Like those red blood-drops on the heath,
The ling which winter cannot sere.

THE GREAT STRIFE



WAR AND PROVIDENCE

Above the monster cannon's roaring thunder,
Above the hailstorm of the musketry,
Above the shrieking shells that burst asunder,
With def'ning crash, man's strongest masonry:
Above the tumult and the din of battle,
The loud command, the bugles' egging call,
Above the groans of wounded and the rattle
Of death in thousand throats, above it all—

There is a hand that overrules man's madness,
And causes ev'n his anger Him to praise,
A hand which from destruction, grief and sadness
Brings better prospects for the struggling race;
The hand of Providence which in all ages
Has shaped the history of human-kind,
And we may read upon its blood-stained pages
The loving purpose of the Father's mind.

From Europe's awful carnage, ruin, sorrow,
Caused by a greed insane and pride of Kings,
There will arise a brighter, better morrow
With righteousness and healing in its wings.
A day of freedom when the thrones must tumble,
A day when nations shall cast off the yoke,
When none shall batten on the poor and humble,
And untruth walk about in priestly cloak.

When Celt and Teuton, Slav and Anglo-Saxon,
Shall wisdom learn from this their plunge in gore,
And cease to spend their strength in paying tax on
Their daily bread for implements of war;
When they shall dwell in harmony as brothers,

Which is the true foundation of the world,
When good of one is good of all the others,
Then will His Kingdom's banner be unfurled.

THE YELLOW PERIL

Written after having heard the Hon. Duncan McKinley's lecture on "The Japanese in America."

Whene'er the races of the East
Shall rise like floods in melting-time,
With fury of the hungry beast;
And homeless in their native clime
Shall shelter seek in this great land;
Woe then to us, if unprepared
We are the influx to withstand;
Remember Rome, and how she fared!

Her wealth and vineyards did allure
The Goth, the Vandal and the Hun,
Their hordes swooped down, while quite secure
She dwelt beneath her summer-sun;
Proud of her past and opulent
She scorned the wild advancing foe,
But found full soon her legions spent
In warding off the fatal blow.

She fell and alien nations took
The scepter from her feeble hand;
Thus written is the judgment book,
Let statesmen read and understand;
The yellow peril from the East,
From Nippon and from old Cathay
Will come unbidden to the feast,
If we neglect to guard the way.

THE VETERAN

Eighty winters have turned him white,
White of beard and of crown,
Slackened his steps and dimmed his sight,
Bent him and weighed him down,
Not only with war, but with toils of peace,
Toil of the pioneer's life,
Now at eighty he takes his ease,
The fruit of his years is rife.

Proud he is of the things achieved,
Glad for things as they are,
Greater far than he once believed
When new was his battle-scar;
But he lives in the past, and speaks
Often of bloody frays,
Of roaring guns and shrapnel's shrieks
In dark Rebellion days.

Bull Run, Chancellorsville, but most
Gettysburg's three days fight,
Pickett's charge, and the thousands lost,
Burying them in the night,
These are subjects on which he dwells,
For he himself was there,
Younger he seems while he sits and tells,
A smouldering fire seems flare.

Tales of war by a man who loves
Peace and good will among men,
Veterans pride without silken gloves,
Calling the rebel his friend,
Sighs he and says: "Oh, war is hell;

Peace is the pearl of great price,
Costlier far than mortal can tell,
Nations who keep it are wise."

Met him I did the other day,
Reading a morning-sheet:
"Blame on the Mexicans for the way
Our Old Glory they treat,
Tearing it down from our consulate,
Trampling it in the mud,
Flag of the free must it meet such a fate,
Flag, bought with patriots' blood!"

"Reading such things, I feel that I could
Shoulder a musket still,
Feel that my insulted country should
'Rise in its strength with a will,
Lifting Old Glory o'er Mexico,
Ne'er to come down again,
Patriots' fire—has it ceased to glow?—
Look to your flag, young men!"

DIES IRAE

A cry arises from the blood-soaked earth,
A cry of anguish, dying in despair,
And with hell's horrors is the world engirt,
The prince of darkness ruleth in the air.

The gods are passing, and the kingdoms fall,
And Cosmos trembles like an autumn leaf;
What seemed the greatest sinks into the small,
And what seemed glory changes into grief.

The jewelled crowns and diadems are cast
Into the balance of the Only Just,
They are like chaff, which scattered by the blast,
Is lost, and mingles with the common dust.

The Dies Irae has arrived at last,
The books are opened by the Lamb of God,
The age of tyranny and greed is past,
He breaks oppression with His iron-rod.

And truth imprisoned, justice quite forgot,
Stand 'for His judgment-seat in spotless white,
The earth and heaven new shall be their lot,
Upon the morn, now dawning from the night.

A MAY MORNING, 1917

From purple woods the stock-dove's notes are flowing,
As deep and melancholy as the night,
Whose shadows from the early morning's glowing
Now take their flight;
So sweetly clear, and gently wooing,
They bring my soul an exquisite delight.

A byre-cock's crow comes shrilly from afar,
And wakes loud answers in the neighbor's yard,
They greet the coming of Apollo's car,
Like many a modern and accepted bard;
But to the woodland notes compared they are
So challenging, and hard.

The farmer rises wearily from bed,
Looks on the morn, and smiles that it is fair,

For he must toil that others may be fed,
And Providence has placed on him its care,
While others fight, and mingle with the dead,
To nourish hope and life becomes his share.

But who has eyes and ears for nature's ways?
Who goes to matin at the stock-doves call?
When man his brother man so foully slays,
And nations into utter ruin fall;
Must war obscure the morning's rosy rays,
And keep a May-dawn's music from the soul?

A time like this demands the bread and meat,
But also music for the famished heart;
And we should rise the better things to greet,
Be they in nature, or in perfect art,
Lest struggling man at last must fall beneath
The load in which now all men have a part.

MY SAILOR-LAD'S LETTER

In the city of tents, by the restless sea,
My sailor-lad long has dwelt,
Since Fate has put forth her dark decree,
And strangely our children's future is spelt,
By the horrors of things to be.

And I think, in his heart he begins to know
The meaning which glamor obscured,
For his words are like cups that overflow
With things which he has endured,
Though never just saying so.

For he is as brave, and more I ween,
Than many a fellow-lad,
And courage excels in his cheerful mien,
He even tries to make others glad,
This sailor of seventeen.

But a letter arrived, the other day,
To his little sister of seven,
To whom he wrote in a childlike way
Of things in a vision given,
And this is what he did say:—

“I stood on the shore of the moonlit lake,
Where the billows came rolling high,
The sound of the sea did my soul awake
To the breaker’s music and westwinds sigh
And to musings of my own make.”

“Methought I saw on the whitecapped waves
My dear ones come to me,—
For the heart perceives what most it craves,
On the world’s dark, turbulent sea,
The sea of clamoring waves.”

“And I saw you dance on the foamy crest,
Like a Naiad or spirit fair,
And mother and all whom I love best
Did beckon to me out there,
In the wind from the plains of the west.”

“And I called on you all by your dearest name,
As lonely I stood that night,
But none of you heard me, and none of you came,
But vanished full soon from my sight,

Like the sheen of a dying flame."

"And it may have been the mist from the spray,
Or something like that which blurred
My eyes as I tried to look away,
And only the moan of the billows I heard,
As they came in a wild array."

"I went to my little tent in the camp,
All cold in the April night,
My bed was cheerless and chill and damp,
And my heart was heavy as I did write,
In the light of the sky's bright lamp."

THE BUGLE CALL

America, awake, awake!
Put on thy armor, for the hour
Has come when Freedom is at stake!
Arise, and show thy spirit's power,
And now, as in thy youth,
The tyrant's shackles break;
And let the truth,
Which made thee great,
Decide the destiny of mankind
Ere 'tis too late!

To thee the world is looking for salvation;
Thou hast it. Give it in God's name!
And it will make thee tenfold more a nation—
Withhold it, and on thee shall be the blame
Of ages—and the shame.

This is the testing-time,
Which like a fire brings forth
The people's real worth;
For men from every clime
Is now this testing-time,
But we shall joy to see,
The gold of love is there,
For home and Liberty,
And Loyalty shall be
Their watchword everywhere.

Awake, America, awake!
The bugle-call to arms is sounding,
Thy sons are hearing it and shake
Old Glory to the winds, with faith abounding,
And 'neath this emblem of the free
A sacred pledge they make,
That it shall be
Unharmed by any foe,
And aid the world in despots' overthrow.

They come—these lads from country-home and
town,
From crowded cities and the lonely plains,
They come in blouses blue and khaki brown,
They come by thousands on the speeding trains,
To meet the hardships and the pains.

Still, thou, America, art half asleep,
Entranced by pleasant ease,
Thou dreamest yet of peace,
For it seems far across the deep,
Where death and grave a harvest reap—
It seems so far away

The nations' judgment day,
But, like nocturnal thief,
It may bring thee to grief,—
Therefore obey the bugle-call to fight,
Arise, put on thy armor, show thy might!

July, 1917

FLAG-RAISING

No longer as an ornament,
Adoring festive places,
The flag is to the masthead sent,
Before uplifted faces,—
No longer as a children's play
We fling it to the breezes,
With thoughtless praise on gala-days,
When each acts as he pleases.

But like a sacramental act
Its raising is attended,
When loyal hearts behold a pact
In colors sweetly blended,—
When men, responsive to its call,
Make grim determination,
That tyranny at last must fall
Before a freeborn nation.

And as it waves above their heads,
'Tis like a benediction
Which sacredness and glory sheds
On men of just conscription,—
They stand aloof, they seem apart,
Like heroes consecrated,

So true and brave, so strong of heart
To freedom dedicated.

October, 1917

THE RED CROSS

(*In hoc signo vinces.*)

O, crimson cross of Calvary!
O, heavenly sign of Constantine!
O, mercy-emblem of the free,
The victory must still be thine!
Thou paradox of horrid war
Shalt stand unscathed when it is o'er!

Was by this sign the pagan host
On Tiber's banks subdued at last,
Without the reck'ning of the cost,
And all the suff'ring of the past,
How much less now should money be
The measure of its victory!

A holy emblem of the hearts
Which love and weep, and gladly give,
That each true soldier who departs
May mid the conflict hope to live,
For when he does the cross behold,
It cheers his soul and makes him bold.

Ah, let it go where'er he goes,
With all its kindly ministries!
Through this from million hearts there flows
A stream of warmest sympathies;
And must he give his all, even then,
It is to him his last true friend.

Speed on, Red Cross, thou heaven-sent,
Into the lands of pain and woe,
Until their madness shall be spent,
And thou shalt stand amid the glow
Of that new dawn of Brotherhood,
A symbol of man's highest good!

THE DOLEFUL MOTHER OF MANKIND

“Rest, rest, perturbed Earth!
O, rest, thou doleful mother of mankind!”

Wordsworth

I have not seen thy beauty for the pall
 Of horror, hanging over all the world,
I have not heard thy music for the din
 Of battle-lines against each other hurled.

And now thy face is covered with a shroud
 Of purest white, and thou wilt take thy rest;
The winds will sing their evening lullabies,
 With memories of love and feathered nest.

And mothers, at the dusk, will list thereto,
 And think of croonings in the years gone by,
When little boys sat by the window-panes,
 And gazed with wonder on the moonlit sky.

And now, perchance, they lie beneath thy shroud,
 Or destined soon to join the sleeping host,—
War's sacrifice, O God, how man doth sin!
 How in the utter darkness he seems lost!

How far from nature has he erred and strayed,
A prey to greed, and arrogance of kings!
Shall he at last, a prodigal, return
To dwell in peace 'neath the "Almighty's wings?"

The doleful mother of mankind doth wait,
And when her children come, anew she dons
Her spring-attire, and smiles forgivingly,
And breathes her peace upon her weary sons.

And then again I'll feel the throb of joy,
And glory in the wonders of thy face,
Yea, revel in thy thousand harmonies,
And wander satisfied along thy ways.

MIDWINTER'S DREAM (1918)

Full tired of war and worry do I turn
To nature in her sweet midwinter dreams,
To purple twilights, when the day's last beams
Like flick'ring candles on the snowdrifts burn,
While star and crescent, in the deepest blue,
Shed peace on fields and woods and frozen lakes;
And from the creeping shadows soon awakes
Life's fairy-world, the one as boy I knew
In unfeigned joy that varied with each scene
Of winter's whiteness, or midsummer's green.

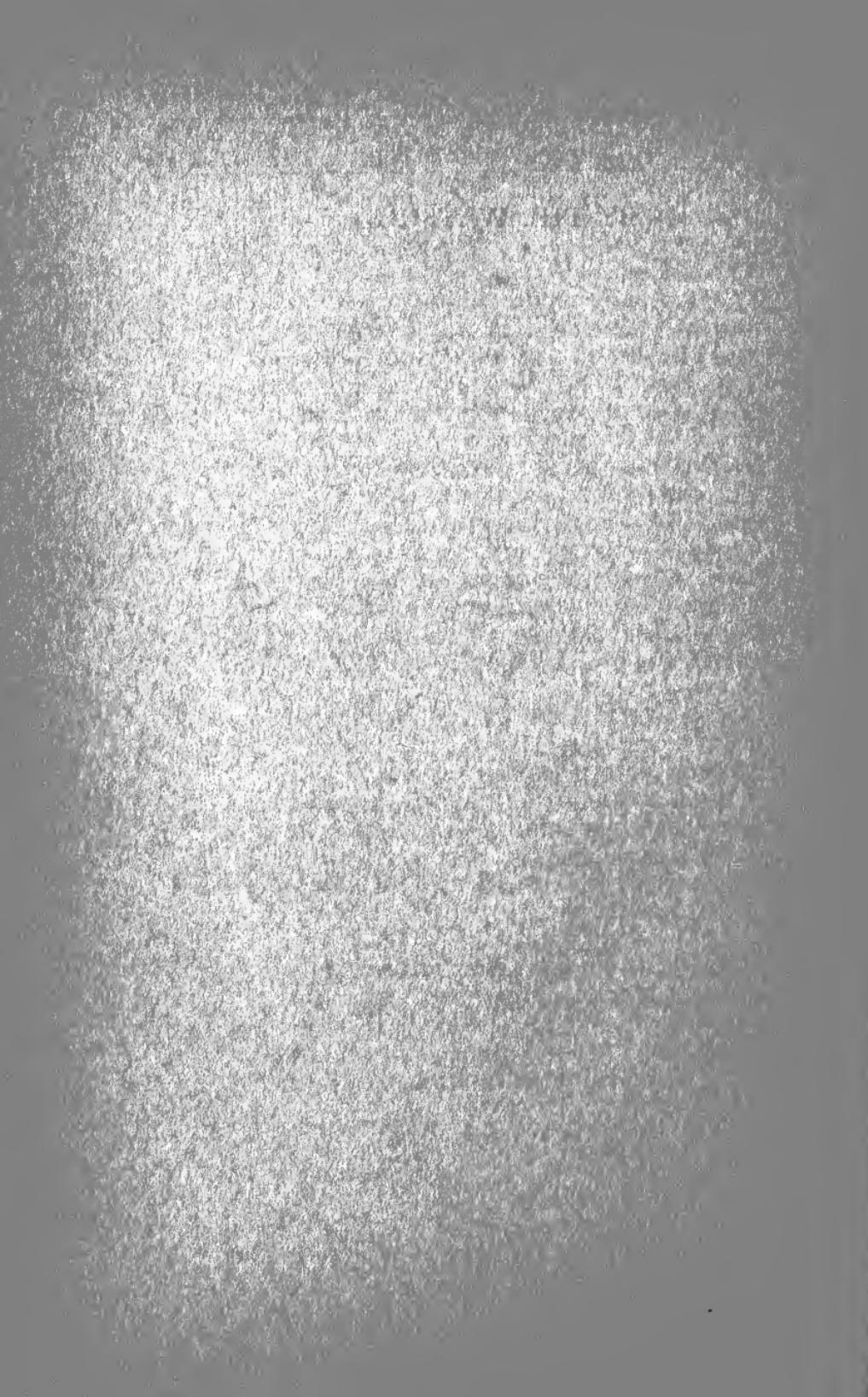
The dormant earth dreams of the life to be,
When spring returns to call it from the grave,
When through its breast shall rush the ardent wave
Of love and hope, and songs of ecstasy;—
But in the moonlight and the shadows dun

The dreams appear in emblems vague and frore,
Like wandering spectres from a mystic shore
Which track the glory of the setting sun
Like love, that plays behind a rosy screen,
Because 'tis yet too modest to be seen.

The winter heavy hangs on humankind—
In homes, and camps, and on the stormy seas,
On Europe's battlefields, whose miseries
Appall with horrors every normal mind ;
Its million graves, decked with the covering
Of jewelled purity, where heroes sleep,
At whose low crosses countless hearts must weep,—
Is holy ground, where life shall take its wing
To truer freedom and a larger love,
With peace on earth and good will from above.

Our country's dream: that when the southwind's
breath
Shall wake to life and gladness all the land,
Like risen pow'r our chosen youth shall stand
Around the flag which means the tyrant's death,—
That like the life which quickens everything,
Our hosts from South and North and East and
West
Shall fare rejoicing o'er the ocean's crest,
And Freedom's victory to Europe bring,—
Midwinter's dream in every loyal heart,
Who dreams it not, in Freedom has no part.

BY THE WAYSIDE



THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

Two hundred long miles and never a tree,
O, nothing but plains all scorched by the sun!
The buffalo's trails one freely may see,
Which over the billowing ridges run,
And here the Indian hunted at will,
And slaughtered and wasted the bison wild,
The heaps of its bleached bones bear witness still
How wanton was he, the prairie's child.

Yes, here is a wildness which bids my soul
To saddle my pony and ride away,
And follow its weird and mysterious call
To freedom complete, if just for a day,
To follow the paths where the bison did roam,
To list to the coyotes and prairie-dog's bark,
But thankful at night for the lone settler's home
And a gleam of his light in the dark.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Majesty, power, and dominion and glory,
Be unto Thee who these wonders hast wrought,
Mountain peaks lofty, all snow-capped and hoary,
Thou alone knowest their wonderful story,
When from the bowels of the earth they were
brought.

Strangest formations and glaciers beaming,
Cataracts rushing from dizziest heights,
Emerald rivers with great swiftness streaming,
Crystal-clear rivulets rushing and gleaming,
Ne'er did I witness more glorious sights.

Down in the valley the flowers are growing,
Trees too, yea, forests are flourishing there,
Sweetly their fragrance on cool breezes flowing,
Terrible grandeur is meek beauty wooing,
Happy the love-pact, the harmony rare.

Thus is the image of God here reflected,
Mighty sublimity, lowliness sweet,
Happy the pilgrim who this has detected,
Travel-worn be he, yet never dejected,
Since he, O, Father, may sit at Thy feet.

MOUNT SHASTA

When from the fiery pangs of earth this queen
Of mountains was brought forth, the spirits of
The air desired to dress her in the sheen
And glory of their pure celestial love;
They gave her for a veil the fleecy cloud,
Which gently floats about her lofty brow;
They gave her for a mantle to enshroud
Her shoulders strong the ever glittering snow;
And then they called upon the fir and pine
To weave a robe of never fading green,
And with the silver stream their wool entwine,
That here and there its bright gleam might be seen;
She thus adorned has stood for eons long,
The queen among the mountains of the west,
In beauty cloth, inspiring men to song,
And lifting human thoughts to what is best.

VERSES

Written while sailing from Vancouver to Seattle.

I've seen the forest and mountains,
I've seen the far stretching plain,
But oh for a whiff of the briny sea,
And a journey across the main!

Oh, then does my soul find its pleasure,
Akin to my childhood joy,
For my home was close to the seashore,
And I lived with the fjord as a boy.

Its unbounded freedom and greatness
Created a love in my soul,
And never I sail o'er the surging sea,
But liberty's voice does me call.

Its mystery, aye, and its music
Have followed me all the way,
And borne—as they are—by the foaming wave,
They blend in an unsung lay.

And all day long do I listen,
And all day long do I look
To freedom which never was nation's,
To songs that were never in book.

TO AN UNKNOWN MUSICIAN

(Verses written while listening to a melody played on board the "Princess Charlotte," sailing through the strait of Juan de Fuca)

What is nature's charms and grandeur,
When compared to what man is,
In his sorrows and his longings,
In his triumphs and his bliss!
Oh, a soul that hath such feelings,
As the one who now doth play,
Such a depth of true emotions,
Lives in God's eternal day!

Thou unconsciously hast moved me,
I'm a captive at thy will,
Though in thousand leagues of journey
Oft my soul has had its fill
Of the beauty of creation,
Known its raptures and delight,
Yet not once such inspiration
Has possessed me as tonight.

Play, play on thou sweet musician,
While the darkness gathers round,
While our ship is speeding onward
With a rhythmic, rushing sound,
While the stars look down upon us,
Mirrored in the tranquil sea,
Render thy interpretation
Of life's joy and misery.

SEATTLE

(A meditation)

Thou princess of the sea, how thou hast grown,
Since last I saw thee, and how beautiful!
The ocean-breezes must to thee have blown
The ardent health which nothing wrong could dull,
The blood of races mingle in thy veins,
The spirit of two worlds have met in thee,
Most genial and free thou here dost reign,
A charming princess of the western sea.

It was with thee I did a year abide,
A year so antithetically mixed,
When painful doubts forbade me to confide,
And life's career, confessed, still was unfixed;
May be it was thy spirit, which I felt,
That gave me song and Oriental dreams,
And when in Occidental shrines I knelt,
Of Oriental truth there came bright gleams.

And hath not doubts been harassing my soul,
And had I shunned to give a heed to fears,
But followed—like thyself—the Spirit's call,
How different had been the lapsing years;
Perhaps I then with glory now could meet
The growth and life, I see on every hand,
But now I sit in sorrow at thy feet,
And find my name was written in the sand.

GJOA

Capt. Amundsen's Ship in San Francisco

Within the sound of the Pacific's roar
Stands Gjoa amid palms and myrtle trees,
Her prow is lifted toward the rocky shore,
As if impatient for the stormy seas,
The sturdy little ship of Arctic fame,
Which bears from storms and ice full many a
mark,
Now like a lion in a cage, grown tame,
Stands here—a relic only—in a park.

A precious relic to Norwegian hearts,
With pride and gratitude they look on thee;
Proud that thou sailed, where man had made no
charts,
The first explorer of a strait and sea,
And grateful that the land of Vikings still
Has sons of courage and adventure bold;
For Roald Amundsen forever will
Remain a man of true heroic mold.

And thou art here incaged to sniff the brine,
Forsaken by the captain and his crew,
A monument the great throngs to remind,
What talent mixed with manliness can do,
And that a nation may be small, yet great,
Be poor and still excel in noblest ken,
A silent witness at the Golden Gate;
A nation's glory is her greatest men.

THE GRAVE IN THE DESERT

Amid the plains of yellow sand and cactus,
Encircled by the distant barren hills,
Amid the awful desert of Nevada,
Beneath the glaring sun which burns and kills,
There is a lonely grave, where the San Padro
Fast speeds from palm-groves of Los Angeles,
A lonely grave just by the road-side,
Which kindly hands unselfishly did bless.

A wooden cross is standing at its head,
On which no name nor date they did inscribe,
Still, half in ruin, it stands there to bless
An unknown sleeper of the wandering tribe.
And at the foot the symbol of his life,
No fitter epitaph on any grave—
For man is but a restless sojourner,
So there they placed the pilgrim's handworn stave.

Who was he? None can tell, some say a tramp,
Who stole a ride and crushed was 'neath the wheels;
But tramps are also men, and sometimes more
Of worth than their unhappy plight reveals;
But this I know: He was a mother's son,
Who still may wonder how her boy does fare,
Who still, perchance, is praying for this one,
The chiefest object of her loving care.

May be some other hearts are looking for
His coming home, though after many years,
Who think of him as he was in his youth,
And seldom speak his name, except with tears,
Who know not of this solitary grave,

Where death and weird oblivion do reign,
Where all seems hopeless, save the crumbling cross,
Which shall at last life's mystery explain.

THE MOUNTAINS OF THE PROPHET

In the purple of the morning,
Through the dreamy haze of day spring,
Did the mountain-tops 'round Salt Lake
Loom before us, as the desert
We were leaving far behind us.
"Lofty mountains of the prophet,"
Did I mutter without thinking,
Came the words, as if repeated
After some one who knew better,
After one whose inspiration
Was from truth and heavenly wisdom;
And instinctively I pondered
That the prophet's eyes had often
Lifted been to these blue mountains,
Whence his help should come, and glory
Of the Lord appear to Zion,
And 'mongst which the trail was winding,
Bloody trail of weary pilgrims,
Seeking an abiding city,
Guarded by their rugged fastness,
And the wide expanse of Salt Lake.

Here, where seemed but barren desert,
Did the prophet's eye see visions
Of a city and a temple,
Where the saints should dwell in saf'ty,
Where in peace they God might worship;
And this vision, now made real,

Lends a lustre to the mountains,
Gives a romance to their valleys;
And whate'er their names may be, I
Call them mountains of the prophet.

CHICAGO

O, wonder of our age!
Consummate wonder, not of state alone, but of our
land,
Unique among the cities dost thou stand
Upon the page
Of history, in youth and might!
Thou didst spring forth as in a night,
From where the redman roved
Along the dreamy shores of Michigan,
Where four-score years ago
Thy life began;
Some fairy moved
Her wand upon thee,
For like a fabled urban didst thou grow.

Colossal mart,
Of commerce, like the heart
Thou sendest out through arteries and veins
Pulsating life into the world;
Napoleons of business-brains
Are marshalling their forces,
With colors high unfurled,
Not on war-harnessed horses,
To madly fight,
To kill and blight,
But to employ each pow'r
To make thee stronger, better every newborn hour.

Thy mighty citadels of stone,
So huge, so tall,
So many and immense,
That with their burden mother earth seems groan,
Throb with a life intense,
And from thy canyons, we call streets,
Great traffic's constant roar us meets.
Great is thy wealth,
Great is thy woe,
Less great thy health,
But great is its foe;
Within thy pale the great extremes
Of good and evil dwell:
Felicities of heavenly dreams,
And hopelessness of hell:
Above thy scum of things
The voice of heaven sings.

July, 1915

THE ISLE OF DREAMS

The island of dreams lies not far away,
Encompassed by sunlight and sea,
I happened to reach it the other day,
While breezes were playing so languidly—
My boat scarcely moved on the bay.

And this is the island I happened to find,
The isle 'mid the glittering deep:
A bower with luxuriant foliage entwined,
'Mongst rocks that are mossy and steep,
Where shadows give rest to the mind.

And here in the shade is a clear, cooling spring,
Which ceaselessly murmurs its song,
And down in a glade the brown thrushes sing,
In afternoons drowsy and long,
In hours that bear dreams on their wings;

And balm for the care-laden spirit have they,
Of duty forgetfulness sweet,
With fragrance of roses they lead you astray,
To realms of fair visions replete,
Bright visions of midsummer-day.

The fairies are here and the unreal things,
Derided by men of pure facts,
Though Science doth saunter here, sometimes she
 clings
To fancy's prophetical acts,
And out of the dreamland them brings.

Yea, great things are born in this enchanted place,
Where poets do loiter and rest,
Beholding fair visions which beckon their race
To vistas more lofty and blest,
In beauty's immaculate ways.

LAKE HARRIET

Behold the noiseless sailboat and canoe,
That slowly glide upon the glassy lake,
Which wedded seems to heaven's lofty blue,
And every silver cloud within its wake;
The lonely youth dreams as he moves along,
And who can tell what wondrous dreams they be,
Fit theme, I ween, for any poet's song,
Of sadness or of gladsome reverie.

There also sail the lover and his lass,
They laugh and chat, and have a gleeful time,
For them the golden moments swiftly pass,
Since they are living in life's summer clime,
To them sweet nature's beauty doth exist
As background only to their happiness,
And heav'n the blue-eyed Harriet has kist,
Because their own true love they dare confess.

And o'er the water strains from Lohengrin
Come floating from the Grecian-pillard stand,
And add enchantment to the charming scene,
The wedding-scene of sky and sea and land,—
The hymeneal of youth's dreams of life,
Of hearts aglow with love's sweet fervency,
Of thousand souls who here forget their strife,
And for an hour their wonted misery.

THE CUBIST

I wandered to-day in an institute,
A wonderful palace of art,
And this I can say in spirit and truth,
It was a delight to my heart,
To see how the masters of ages past
Have found a place in this shrine,
Till I came to a room, methinks 'twas the last,
Which the Cubist's contortions confine.

A disgrace, I said, to allow in this place,
What lunatic homes should adorn,
An insult to art and the human race,
Of spirits degenerate born,

A meaningless daub, a horrid display
Of colors and lines and all,
But then to myself I also did say:
May be 'tis the age—and its soul.

A wicked word it was this to say,
As I left for the congested street,
And followed the masses which made their way
To a place where ten thousand did meet
Three times a day, to be edified
With burlesque, in Jesus name,
And painfully in my soul it cried:
"The Cubist again, just the same!"

I glanced at a paper at hour of sleep,
And found a whole page about bards,
Who gained a renown by a single leap,
With something which all art discards,
Again I said: 'tis the Cubist's age,
A prophet is he after all,
Of the church and the stage and the printed page,
Of the age that has bartered its soul.

THE HANDCLASP

Full thousands of leagues over land, over seas,
I travelled, for two things to find:
From work, and its routine, a needed surcease,
And knowledge, to quicken the mind.

I moved mid the crowds in the cities of fame,
I pondered their pleasures and pride,
A stranger, alone, wherever I came,
I heard but the surge of the tide.

Though knowledge increased with the sight of the
new,
Though grandeur gave thrills of delight,
Though marvelling oft at the things, man can do,
Yet weariness came with the night.

And I longed for the sound of the voice of a friend,
I longed for my home far away,
When, behold, I met one at a thoroughfare's end,
At the close of a wearisome day!

The clasp of his hand, with the love of his heart,
The warm and the genuine grip,
Brought greater delight than the sight of all art,
And all wonderful things of the trip.

A COUNTRY STORE

Beside a winding country road
A house unique one sees,
It used to be the Lord's abode,
Now that of groceries.

A church with graveyard in its rear,
Where many saints do sleep,
O, could they rise, I greatly fear,
It would be for to weep,

Beholding what the years have wrought
In changes of the place,
How man for gain has rudely sought
Its mem'ries to efface.

For here, where generations met
To worship God in truth,
Now Mammon has his motto set,
With Vandal hand uncouth.

Where once did sound the Holy Word,
By men of earnest heart,
Now bargainings are daily heard,—
The language of the mart.

Where once the altar stood, now stands
A stove around which sit
The gossiper's unholy bands
And swear and lie and spit.

And could each much neglected mound
Yield up its dust to life again,
The words of Christ would then resound:
“My Father's house ye made a den.”

But thus our sacrilegious age
Is blinded by the god of gold,
Soon finished is its sacred page,
Our days of worship well-nigh told.

SUNSETS ON CLEARWATER LAKE, MINN.

(To Mrs. A. W. W.)

First Evening

A path of trembling gold, from where I stand,
Across the limpid lake, to darkling woods,
Upon the far off strand,
Where evening's glory broods,
Until it changes into rose,
A livid pink, suffusing all,
The mighty water's deep repose;
And as the fiery ball
Drops into clouds on the horizon's rim,
The hue, most delicate, takes on a crimson glow,
In which the shadows of the shore grow dim,
And slowly all things into darkness flow;
Anon the moon appears and clothes the scene
And floating mist-veil into languid sheen.

Second Evening

A sea of fire in which a sky
Of lavender and blue and red
Together with the clouds of changing dye
Reflected are—divinely wed;
And we, who rove about, are led
By an illusion, such as seldom seen:
A strange receding of the deep,
As if we sat above a waterfall,
O'er which our skiff full soon must leap
Into immensity, bright, hyaline,
Where brooding spirits beck and call.

A glorious view is heaven in the depth
Of tranquil seas, but more
Its virtues, mirrored in a human heart;
And thou, who hast its kindnesses so kept,
That changing vistas or receding shore
Can not extinguish life's immortal part
In the abiding love divine, as clear
As all this evening glory in a glassy mere,
Art more than all what nature can express,
Whose word can cheer, whose gentle hand can
bless.

Illusions!—much is but illusions:
Fear, and all the ghosts that troop with it.
The good alone, in all its sweet effusion,
Is real as the sun, by which the world is lit;
The cataract of death, the dread abyss—
Does not exist, for all the light is His.

Third Evening

To-night the rising storm-clouds hide
The sun's departure from our gaze;
A heavy mist begins to glide.
Across the water's ashen face;
A host of swallows, circling, fly
Like cavalcades upon a plain;
A myriad of insects die,
Uncounted lives, like drops of rain
Lost in the sea, lost in the All,
The life, the death, the Oversoul.
And little children laugh and play
Upon the beach, and on the pier,
In them the closing of the day,
With gathering storm, awakes no fear,

For in their souls the light remains,
That oped the water-lily's breast,
And woke the warbler's glad refrain,
And all the heart of nature blest;
What matters though the clouds obscure
Its finished course one single eve,
If we, like children, can allure
Even clouds and mist to pleasure give.

Fourth Evening

The glitt'ring wavelets blind my sight,
And neath the hand I needs must scan
The dazzling shimmer of the light,
Which like Seraphic highways span
The breeze-swept, glad expanse;
Methinks I see the Naiads dance
To music of the swaying reeds
And rushes, where the narrows jut,
Adorned with many-colored weeds,
From Neptune's gardens freshly cut.

Amid the glimmer one discerns
A boat wherein a youth doth stand,
Like Hiawatha's passing, turn
Its prow with dreamy ease from land,
The well nigh naked youth to me
Is like a god of Grecian mould,
Whose perfect form and symmetry
Is like Apollo's of old;
He speaks to fellows in the deep,
Whose heads move 'mid the curling gleams,
Alas, that death should ever reap
Among such scenes of pleasant dreams!

But nature always clamors for
What she hath lent to life a while,
And though we borrow more and more,
And all her powers do beguile,
Yet comes the hour on land or sea,
She asks for all with usury.

The boy lifts up his hands and dives,
A pleasant plunge that has no dread,
But I recall some precious lives,
Which thus were reckoned 'mongst the dead,
And in my heart, at end of day,
A prayer for the lads I say.

Fifth Evening

Song of the West-wind o'er the waves,
Song of the billows, as the lave
The shoreline with a mystic moan,
Song of the rushes in the shallow,
Song of the aspen tree and sallow,—
Ever as the undertone.

Song of cicadas and the cricket
From ragged grasses and the thicket,
Song of the whirring dragon-fly,
That goes to sea, but for to die,
Song of the warblers, flitting nigh,
Song of the loon's weird, distant cry.

Song of a horn on yonder hill,
That echoes in the far away,
The tone is soft as of a rill,—
"The end of a perfect day"—
As sinks the sun, and I depart,
With all this music in my heart.

TWILIGHT

A dull, pink evening sky,
A white ridge shadow-streaked below,
The tall, dark trees near by,—
In the deep snow.

Two horses, one is white,
As white as is the new-fall'n snow,
The other black as darkest night,—
Along the highway go.

One, emblem of the parting day,
The other, of approaching night,
And o'er the hill the rosy ray
Of this one hour's delight.

APRIL

O, I love the month of April, when the southwind
gently blows,
Calling nature from its slumber, from cold winter's
long repose,
Till the meadow its awakening by a tint of ver-
dure shows,
And the willow with bright saffron in the evening
sunshine glows;

When the meadow-lark is standing on the fence-
post, with its throat
Lifted up to merry lovesongs which across the
prairies float;

When the robin on the house-lawn proudly stands
in his red coat,
Then a-sudden makes departure with a shrill and
happy note;—

When the air is full of meaning, clothed in life's
sweet mystery,
Touching all things with its magic, even with love's
ecstasy,
And you see it and you feel it, it is upon land and
sea,
It is nature's Easter dawning after drear Geth-
semane.

And the children's faces brighten, and their laugh-
ter has a ring
Which no winter-sport could give them, and no
lamplight play could bring;
Even the aged in whose bosom life's enchantments
seldom sing,
Take a pleasure in the message of this happy month
of spring.

Jocund April, lovely April, of all months my choice
thou art,
Since in thee there is a solace for all nature's weary
heart,
And in thee there is a promise that we all shall
have a part
In the hope which man professes through his worship
and his art.

I'M A PART OF THE WIND AND THE CURLING WAVE

I'm a part of the wind and the curling wave,
Of the budding trees and the tender blade,
A part of the life that has burst its grave,
Of crocus and buttercup studding the glade,
Of the goose-berry bush and the shadow it throws,
Of the moss on the rocks and the slender ferns,
Of the burly weed that earliest grows,
And all that quickens and upward yearns.

I'm a part of the light, and the golden flash
Of the flicker's wing o'er the glittering pond,
Of the sable crow in the lofty ash,
A-calling his mate in the trees beyond;
Of the dragon-fly's gossamer wing and flight;
Of the insect just risen from winter's sleep;
Of things that find in the sun delight,
Whether they blossom, or fly, or creep.

A part of the risen life and the all
Eternal Spirit, anew each spring,
Wherefore I follow its kindly call,
To hear the carol His angels sing,—
What saith it? O, you must hear it alone,
In the paths of the woods on an April day,
And feel, as I do, you are truly one
With nature—to fathom the glorious lay.

THE CHIPPING SPARROW

The clouds are hanging dark and low,
The budding trees are still quite bare,
And from the North the cold winds blow,
Of spring we almost might despair.

But from the branches, ashen gray,
Outside my window, comes a song,
A warbling Chipping Sparrow's lay,
To cold and dimness nonchalant.

His music has a thrilling joy,
It warms the soul, allures a smile,
Its brooding doubts he does destroy,
And makes it happy like a child.

And now a sudden, cheering gleam
Falls on him from a rift of blue,
I see him in a golden dream,—
I know that song alone is true.

His crimson tuft a poet's crown,
His tawny breast a badge of love,
And that clear sunray coming down,
Our Father's watchful eye above.

IN THE LILAC-BLOSSOM-TIME

When the fragrance of the purple and lavender
lilac-bloom
Meets the sweet distilled aroma from the plum
and apple-trees,
And the dainty scent of violets amid the garden-
gloom,
Where's the music of the hum and drone of pollen-
painted bees,
Then my soul takes up its harp, which long upon
the willows hung,
And attunes it to the gladness that is floating in
the air,
For it is in lilac-blossom-time that everything grows
young,
And the heart of man is lighter, and has little
less of care.

In the lilac-blossom-time it seems, the brown thrush
blitest sings,
And the wood-dove cooes the deepest from a breast
brimful with love,
And the Oriole's glad music clearest 'mongst the
branches rings,
To its mate that sits abrooding on the nest upon
the bough;
And the Whip-poor-will is calling from the wood-
lands dark, at eve,
With a zest which makes the farmer feel that even
the night hath song,
And in the cool of day he thinks, it is quite good to
live,

"Since after toil I here can rest the lilac-trees
among."

In the lilac-blossom-time, methinks, are children
happiest,

Since with that blossoms' coming a great liberty
draws nigh,

The days of school are over, and they feel supremely
blest

In the days mid nature's glories, 'neath the blue
and open sky,

Or to lie beneath the lilacs with a story-book in
hand,

Reading perfume into fancies, Puck and fairies
twixt each line,

Till the heart is with them dancing in a happy
wonderland,

While the shadows of the after-noon with lilac
hues combine.

In the lilac-blossom-time the lovers often fondly
meet,

And drink the blossom's odor, a true potency for
dreams,

And ofttest when the evening-dew makes it a ten-fold
sweet,

A-trembling like a tear of joy within the clear
moonbeam,

The youth in his new happiness a prince of king-doms
is,

The maiden is a being fair, as from some other
clime,

And heaven itself is upon earth in that pure, bind-ing
kiss,

There in her father's garden in the lilac-blossom-time.

THE RUNNEL'S DITTY

I met a runnel amid the meads,
In the evening, in the evening,
And it did ramble 'mongst rush and reeds,
In the evening, in the evening,
And I did linger to hear its song,
As it did carelessly wind along,
In the evening, in the evening.

What sang the runnel upon its way?
In the evening, in the evning;
I listened long to its happy lay,
In the evening, in the evening;
But all my musing seemed but in vain,
And all its music awoke but pain,
In the evening, in the evening.

The blooming thornapple on its bank,
Also listened, also listened,
And flags and buttercups, dewy dank,
Also listened, also listened;
And thrushes nestling in alder-trees,
Did hush their babes with its melodies,
And they listened, and they listened.

I asked the violets on its side,
In the evening, in the evening,—
If they its song would to me confide,
In the evening, in the evening;
And like some children of guileless soul
They said: "Its lay is the song of all,
In the evening, in the evening."

“The ceaseless longing to reach the sea,
In the evening, in the evening;
The song of life and eternity,
In the evening, in the evening;
A lay of love in the early morn,
A lay of hope to the lone and lorn,—
In the evening, in the evening.”

THE CHILD AND THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

She pored o'er the open page
Of the Gospel, according to John,
Where the Ruler did Christ engage
At hours of the silent night,
And sought for his soul that light,
Which God sent forth through His Son.

But she could not read a word,
A child of four summers she,
Not ever, even once, had she heard
That story of second birth,
Nor asked, like the wise of the earth,
“O, Lord, how can these things be?”

Her face had the glory of heaven,
The look of an angel her eye,
I said: “And to her it is given
To know, for her soul is one
With the soul of this page of John,
And the wisdom that comes from on high.”

THE BIRTHDAY CAKE

Five little candles on her birthday cake,
Five little candles brightly burning,
We gaze on them, while memories awake
Of happy moments, nevermore returning.

Five little years of childhood happiness,
Five little years, when oft we played together,
How often did her love and joy us bless,
When days seemed dark, and stormy was the weather.

The tiny lights are dying one by one,
As one by one the years their flight have taken,
I shed a tear for that which thus is gone,
And kiss the child for whom the cake was baked.

MY GOLDFISH

Five little goldfish in a vase
My simple study-room do grace,
And oft when tired of reading books,
I turn to them my weary looks,
And pleasure find in their quaint ways,
Reminding me of ancient lays.

Amid the deep, on sparkling sands,
A tow'ring Gothic castle stands,
Its gates and windows open wide,
Through which the lustrous carplings glide,
Like sea-nymphs in the days of old,
Like mermaids in an age of gold.

They hide beneath the dark green weed,
And fondly on its frondlets feed,
It seems an island near the shore,
Where Lorelei did sing of yore,
And gold and green most softly blend,
As then—ere romance had an end.

O, days of legendary lore,
Of fairy-folk and nymphs galore!
When tired of this prosaic age,
And weary of the modern page,
I find my golden fish suggest
The dreams with which your life was blest.

II

Sometimes, when in unhappy mood,
I on my limitations brood,
And think how narrow the confines,
In which the soul almost repines,
I turn again—just to behold
My finny friends of burnished gold.

How little is their rounded sphere,
Though rivers wide are rushing near!
How little chance themselves to be,
In freedom's realm, the sunny sea!
I wonder not that mournful gape,
And rolling glance they seem to ape.

Yet, all the pity I bestow
Is tearless, since in heart I know,
It would be fatal for my fish
To leave the boun'dry of their dish,

For they would be an easy prey
To larger ones in stream or bay.

And then this moral comes to me,
While craving larger liberty;
It might be death the bounds to break,
Which fate and duty round me make,
So be content and get the best
Of what, perhaps, is but a jest.

THE FIDDLER'S CHRISTMAS MUSIC (Founded on a Norwegian Folk-lore.)

There lived in the land of Ole Bull
A peasant-fiddler of old,
Whose soul with music was often more full
Than his violin ever told.
He knew not the art of clefs and notes,
Such seemed but some mystic runes,
But he heard the music that richly floats
In nature's unwritten tunes.

He played for the dances at many a farm,
Led many a bridal train,
And everywhere did he naively charm
The mirth-loving maid and swain;
But sometimes he played in a lonely place,
When no one, perchance, was near,
And then there was sadness in his face,
In his eyes a furtive tear.

For the strains which he heard he could never play,
Though trying it o'er and o'er,

Forgotten they were from day to day,
And wandered his way no more;
Sometimes in anger he flung the thing,
Which would not obey his soul,
Then took it again with its broken string,
Like a mother her child from his fall.

On a Christmas eve he had listened long
To the tones in the snowy air—
The bells that sent forth their joyous song,
Re-echoing here and there
In mountain hollow or forest deep,
Or far o'er the frozen fjord,
A thousand voices woke from their sleep,
To join in the heavenly chord.

In the house the Christmas feast was spread,
And he ate and drank as he should,
There was meat and pudding and raisin bread,
And the Yule-tide brew was good;
They feasted well on that holy eve,
And did not forget a pray'r,
And the fiddler felt it was good to live,
For banished he had all care.

In his sleep that night he seemed to see
His room full of fairy-folk,
They danced about with a wondrous glee
To the tunes their fiddler awoke—
Such tunes as he never had heard before,
So soft, so clear, and gay,
Like silver ripples against a shore,
In the morn of a summer's day.

He saw the player, his strings and bow,
Each touch of his finger tips,
From which such gladness did overflow,
With pleasure of lovers' lips;
He asked the elfin to teach him one,
Ah, one from his repertoire,
Which he gladly did, and when it was done,
Another, just for encore.

He taught him three, and he taught him four,
Yea, six, while the fairies danced,
Till a tankard of beer fell to the floor,
At which the elfin glanced,
And saw a cross on its side engraved,
Then rose and run with a cry,
The fairies following, as morning waved
His rosy plumes in the sky.

The peasant awoke from his fairy dream,
Sought his fiddle, began to play,
And strange enough, as it now may seem,
Remembered tunes in the elfin way,
He played them all till the day shone bright,
He played them all till the church bells rang,
To call to mass among candle lights,
To hear the story which angels sang.

But neither mass, nor the homily
Could fix his mind on the solemn things;
An absent look in his face one might see,
And his fingers moved as on fiddle-strings;
His wife did see it and almost wept,
And prayed that he for sweet heaven's sake
Might be from fairies and devils kept,

Both when asleep, or when awake.

That Christmas season, for three weeks long,
He played for dances, yea, every night,
His melodies were both sweet and strong,
And gave the people such great delight,
They said they never before had heard
Such music come from a violin,
And wondereed much of what things had stirred
The fiddler's heart, or where he had been.

But this he kept to himself alone,
For often since he the fairies saw,
List to their music when brightly shone
The moon on greensward or glitt'ring snow,
And more and more did he learn their art,
Yea, some did whisper, he was possest,
But he had won every woman's heart,
When he was old, and was laid to rest.

CRUEL KITTY

Kitty is playing on the side of the hill,
All in the new-mown grass,
Hunting a butterfly; O, don't you kill
That beautiful thing, alas!
She caught it and wounded its wings!

"How cruel of kitty to play in this way;"
Your friend on top of the hill,
If she were alive, now surely would say,
Alas, that her voice should be still!
That prattled of beautiful things.

In her grave on the hill the little one lies;
Her kitten at play in the hay;
And looking thereon a mother's heart cries,
With grief she is pining away,
Like the butterfly's sunder-torn wings.

TO—

Were I an artist, I would paint thee thus:—
Tall, lithe and slender, like a Grecian youth
In flowing garb, whose lines enhance the form,
A face whose soul is innocence and truth,
And eyes of dreamy love, that blesses us
With gladness, like the sunlight after storm.

Were I a master of sweet music, I
Would turn the rhythm of thy motion, and
Thy voice and laughter into melody,
A symphony, fit for a royal band,
With joy of glitt'ring waves and zephyr's sigh
With love's entrancement and pure ecstasy.

But I, alas, have nothing but a rhyme,
In which to clothe the pleasure of an hour,—
An hour amid the fields and on the stream;
I picked for thee the rarest, sweetest flower,
A wild rose, mingling odor with the thyme,
Since that seems truest of a poet's dream.

FAREWELL

Farewell, dear lass, it grieves me much
That thou must leave us here alone,
Thou gav'st our summer months a touch
Of happiness, as seldom known,
Thou gavest such a sunny cheer,
That every day seemed like a play,
And now, when autumn's winds blow drear,
Thou needs must go so far away!

The leaves lie yellow on the lawn,
The blackbirds gather into flocks,
The thrush and lark have long since gone,
The crows sit cawing on the rocks,
The heavy clouds soar wild and black
Across the meadows, sear with frost,
I stand alone beneath their wrack,
And feel that summer's joy is lost.

But I shall ne'er forget thy smile,
And ever in my heart shall ring
The laughter which did e'er beguile
Each brooding care to take its wing,
Thy winsomeness which woke my soul
From lethargy's dun dreariness
Shall leave a glamour over all,
And even winter's darkness bless.

So fare thee well, my brown-eyed lass,
May heaven keep thee pure and sweet!
May ne'er a shadow o'er thee pass
Of evil's harm or dark deceit!
And mayst thou from the Southern clime
Return when April's breezes blow,

When minstrel hosts perceive 'tis time
To lift their wings and northward go.

ALONE

It is good to be all alone,
In the dark of the night, aye, the starry night,
When those you love truest are from you gone,
In the far away, beyond sound and sight;
When the wind is singing its sad, strange song
In gloomy tree-tops, a-tow'ring high,
And whispers the names for whom you long,
And the love for which you sigh.

It is good to be all alone with one's soul,—
The soul which so seldom has chance to speak;
It is good to be freed from the narrow and small,
To rise from the vale to the mountain peak,
To be guided by stargleams into a sphere,
Where the world does not reach with its clamour
and cry,
And there in the silence pause, till you hear
Your innermost self and the God that is nigh.

LINES ON AN OLD SONGBOOK

An old hymnbook, owned by my great-grandmother, and bearing the following inscription:

Cenfebam Hafniae d. 9 Sept. Anno 1684,
is a collection of hymns and religious songs, written
by Dorothe Engelbrets Datter, a poetess of con-
siderable distinction in Norway and Denmark in
the 17th century.

I faintly can remember still
A scene from childhood years,
A picture dim which always will
Be treasured in my heart until
Beyond the change of good and ill,
It glorified appears.

I saw through an half-open door
An aged woman's face,
Amid the sunlight on the floor,
Uplifted and it seemed adore
A heavenly vision, or implore
For mercy and for grace.

An open book was in her hand,
From which she read and sang,
I was too young to understand,
And yet I thought it was most grand,
A music from a better land
Which through her singing rang.

This is the book, or part thereof,
An aged, thumbworn tome,
Quaint hymns of penitence and love,
By one whom heaven did endow
With glory fit for Sapho's brow,
Far in her northern home.

I look upon each yellow page,
Each stain and finger-mark,
And see in them my heritage,—
My Great Grandmother's heritage,
Which did her pious soul engage,
In times remote and dark.

PEARLS AND PALACES

I wandered down a dusty road,
And spent myself to sheer fatigue,
Until I fell beneath a load
Of misery and man's intrigue,
When all at once I saw a string
Of lustrous pearls, close by the way,
It seemed such strange a hap and thing,
That I believed my sense astray.

But as I dared to touch the gems,
And as I felt their soft delight,
And saw the coloring, which hems
The robe of dawn o'er snowcapped height,
Play in their orbs, I felt a thrill
Of pleasure surging through my soul,
And then a peace, so rare and still,
Upon my restless heart to fall.

At length I rose to journey on,
But with a new-born strength and zest,
The burden gone, I saw the sun,
I felt that life is heaven-blest,
The string of pearls I treasured most,
And guarded it with fondest care,
Lest such a fount of joy be lost,
Lest doubt again should me ensnare.

I travelled long, at last I came
Into a place of Palaces,
Such as in heaven have highest fame,
But which the earthbound covet less;
The saints of old did know them well,

And gave their all that they might win
Admittance to the humblest cell,
And God's forgiveness for their sin.

Each pearl became within my hand
A key wherewith the doors to ope,
And angel guides did ready stand
To point to each sincerest hope;
And dazzling glory filled the halls,
To archéd roof the music rose,
And master's art adorned the walls,
And o'er it all hung sweet repose.

The first and nearest door, I tried,
Was one a singer, long ago,
Found when distressed with pain he cried
For healing streams to him to flow,
Then sang his praise alone to Him,
"Who healeth all thy sicknesses,"
And there I found a truth, now dim,
That God with health the sick can bless.

Another palace-door a pearl
Swung open widely to my gaze,
And like the waves that gently curl
Upon the sunlit water's face,
There came in waves of harmony
A thousand voices in this place,
All promises of things to be,
And of His daily help of grace.

As the orchestral melody
By variations is enhanced,
So did his words: "Come unto me,"
Lead jubilant; I stood entranced,—

"Come unto me, I'll give you rest,
My yoke is easy, burden light,"—
Ah, here I found all that my quest
Had sought in weariness and night.

Another pearl did ope the gate
To throne-rooms of the Sovereign's pow'r,
Where not a shadow of dark Fate
Had part in any dial's hour;
But truth and righteousness and love
Did govern life and destiny,
The Sovereign's will, supreme above
The ways of man, did all decree.

And in this hour of awful gloom,
When faith is wrecked, and hope is low,
The glory from this Palace-room
Makes all the mountain-peaks aglow;
And shadows flee from vale and plain,
And struggling armies see a gleam,
Commensurate with grief and pain,—
The truth of what seemed but a dream.

My rosary has many beads,
I need an endless life to learn,
To what exalted things each leads,
For which my soul doth truly yearn,—
And when the innermost I gain,
There hangs a cross which lights the way
To Palace-portals where I fain
Would be this moment, and for aye.

VICTOR HUGO

It was on a midsummer night,
Now long ago,
In the far-off land of Norway,
I sat in an open window,
And dreamed.

The valley and hills and distant mountains
Were all like a dream
In the soft light and wonderful calm
Of the night.

The odor of cherry-blossoms and birch,
And the mingled perfume from meadows and hills
and vale
Wrought with a fairy-potion,
Dreams and thrills of the soul.

The lazy smoke of the Saint John's fire
Like pillars rose from the wooded heights
To the sky cerulian,
Where the evening star shone bright,
Like an eye that twinkles with tears of joy;
It shimmered above a cataract,
Whose music rose and fell
Where the river leaped over the rocks to the fjord.

The night had voices:
Laughter and singing of youth round the bonfires;
Purling of streams, and twitter of sleepless birds;
Yet all was peace, and joy, and life,
And mystery such as the Avon Bard
Did see and hear on a Midsummer night.

I was but a boy, and the names of the great
Were new to me, and yet not strange,—
I knew not why.

That day I had read about Hugo,
That he, the greatest of singers
In our own day, was dead;
I felt a heart-gripping sorrow,
And wept as over a friend.

It seemed that his spirit was there,
In the dreams of that Saint John's night,
That all the fairies and flowers and streams
Were greeting him with a love that had sadness,
And yet which rose on the wings of gladness,
Up to the stars.

My soul did feel it, I know not how,
That he was there, a part of it all,
The Highpriest of Nature, Romance and Life.

TO A FRIEND

In the stillness of the evening,
When the dew is on the grass,
And the forest stands a-dreaming,
'Round the moonlit lake of glass,
Do I hear a sighing whisper,
As when happy lovers part,
It is thine I hear, my lady,
Rising from all nature's heart.

When the autumn winds are blowing,
And the yellow leaves fall down,
Whirled upon the river, flowing

To the mighty, distant sound,—
Then I hear thy soul a-weeping,
For the love that is no more,
For the life now in God's keeping,
On a far-off, unknown shore.

When the fields and hills are covered
With a blanket of pure snow,
And the streams, where oft we hovered,
Unseen 'neath the thick ice flow,
Then I know thy life lies hidden
Under sorrow's wintry plaid,
But the hope, which seems forbidden,
In its course cannot be staid.

When in spring new life is risen
From the grave with songs of joy,
Then thy soul shall leave its prison,
And its broken harp employ,
Then again that sighing whisper,
Charged with love and happiness,
I shall hear amid the woodlands
Which the dreamy lake caress.

TO A "KNOCKER"

This sturdy world is hard to knock,
Though hit it as you may,
It moves, unmindful of the shock,—
In its accustomed way.

It laughs a little cynic laugh
And says: Fall into line,

The use of Mose' rod and staff
Is but for the divine.

Come, son, or thou must surely die,
One fool the more or less
Will not provoke a mournful cry,
Nor cause an hour's distress."

"So know thy best, be like the rest,
And stop thy foolish knocking,
Who cares for 'vision' and for 'quest,'
Save one, the quest of shopping."

A VISION

To-day I had a vision of the thing
Which we call life—the sum of human life—
In person of an upright monster-man,
Decked in a foot-long robe of many hues,
Whose front was squares of yellow, red and green,
And blue and purple and the violet,
Whose back was sombre brown, but mostly black;
His large and bony feet strode heavily,
A-trampling, upon beings in his path,
On men and women and on little babes,
And crushed them in the dust without a pity,
Once in a while he lifted to his breast
Some one with fondling pleasure, and did bear

The favorite aloft, that all might see
His glory's contrast to their misery;
But then at length, he tired of even such,
And cast them down into the common dust.
I looked upon his visage, strangest this,
A blending of the human and the beast:—

But then the vision vanished, and I heard
A cry and circling of the Pheonix bird.

SIGNS CELESTIAL

I read in the mystic Kabbala
That there is a creature in heaven
To which the most blessed Jehovah
Two wonderful tokens hath given:

A word in its forehead at morning,
A word in its forehead at night,
Like jewels those words are adorning
The creature with glory and light.

The first one is "Truth" which is telling
The angels of heaven, it is day,
Its lustre most joyous, compelling,
Is guiding and keeping their way.

The other is "Faith," which betoken
That night is advancing apace,
With rays that are dimmer and broken,
Like sunset through silvery haze.

And I pondered this much, till I ventured
The signs on this world to apply,
Though Rabbins of old might have censured,
And judged that for this I must die.

But the sign that is set on this creature—
The world—I perceive is the last,
The first may belong to the future,
When night's gloomy vigils are past.

DESPAIR

Hence vain, illusive Hope,
Thou errant guide, thou jesting, mocking fool!
For thee should be the hangman's rope,
Or drowning in the deepest pool,
Or everlasting prison in the darkest pit
Of Dante's hell,
Where like a Siren thou should'st sit
And mock thyself by saying: all is well.

I henceforth choose black Melancholy's aid,—
The only prophetess of real truth,
Who nothing promises, who never made
A fair illusion for aspiring youth;—
“All is nothing,” she doth whisper still,
A whisper from a Sibyl's cave it seems,
A soothing balm for every human ill,
A true solution of man's checkered dreams.

Thou sable sovereign of man's destiny,
Thou cypress-crowned queen of night and grave,
Thou ruler of man's woe and misery,—
The world's great cry which like a wave
Breaks on the rocks of cruel Fate,—
Thou autocrat of all that overwhelms
Man's soul with sorrow, disappointment, hate,
To thee belongs, at last, all worlds and realms.

HOPE

When mid the ruins of my life
I sit dejected and forlorn,
And think, how useless was the strife

That was by strong ambitions borne,
And count the years and reck the cost,
Which all seem idly spent and vain,
Fair Hope comes, saying: "Nought is lost,
Life's failures bring the better gain!"

When sorrow, troubles come in flocks,
Like angry clouds, driven by the blast,
Like waves against the riven rocks,
On which my helpless soul is cast,
And night and darkness come apace,
With not a friend around to cheer,
Again she shows her angel face,
And whispers gently: "Do not fear."

When by the graves of those I love
Dark doubts are hovering around,
She lifts my tearful look above
The withered lily on the mound,
And in the blue, so far away,
I see a gleam, it seems a smile,—
Again I hear her softly say:
"Despair not, wait a little while."

O, blessed Hope, without whose aid,
No victory is ever won,
In life's sweet morn and sunny glade,
Or evening shadows drear and dun,
Thou art our guardian angel, who
Walks with us, when all others fail,
And scatters roses, fresh with dew,—
O, heaven-born all hail! all hail!

BE STILL MY SOUL, BE STILL

Be still my soul, be still;
Fret not thyself with cares of life,
With worldly vanity and strife,
Which bring but ill.

Withdraw thyself and be alone,
Alone in holy solitude,
Then shalt thou know the highest good,
And for thy sins atone.

Then shalt thou know the harmony
Of sweet celestial strains,
Whose soothing notes allay the pains
Brought on by human misery.

This world is void of peace,—
'Tis nowhere found, except within,
When from the earthly gain to win,
Thou deignest cease.

AWAKE

The livelong night I lie awake,
While all the world is slumbering,
And weary I am numbering
The hours which on the stillness break;

The hours, which give to others balm,
The blessed balm of soothing sleep,
My mind in cruel torture keep,
And yet demand a perfect calm.

The hours whose loss I oft bewail
At close of busy workingday,
Now gladly I hear pass away,
And the approaching morning hail.

And yet their woe hath recompense,
Which sleeping mortals do not know,
For gentle voices come and go,
With solace to the weary sense.

From distant meadows comes the sound
Of cowbells, stirred at intervals,
And to my heart with joy recalls
The age when in their clang I found

Suggestions of a fairy land,
When Elfins rang their silver bells
In flow'ry meads and shady dells,
Or on the quiet moonlit strand.

I hear the cricket's autumn song,
The ceaseless music of the night,
It tells about the summer's flight,
And of its life, so full and strong,

Of memories with love aglow,
In youth and manhood's fuller life,
Of vanished days with glory rife,
Whose joys I ne'er again shall know.

And far away the river sings
Its lullaby out to the sea,
A sense of rest comes over me,
Perhaps sweet sleep at last it brings.

THE AWAKENING

Some morn I shall awake and find life's dreams are
ended,
And find its fears and hopes have into meaning
blended,
And from the gloom of night the day, at last, as-
cended.

To find that storms and waves have into calm sub-
sided,
My well-nigh broken bark has into harbor glided,
And find the compass true in which my soul con-
fided.

ASTERS

A bunch of fresh asters, purple and white and red,
Stands on my table, fixed in a Mexican bowl,
Thanks I did render for food which my body has
fed,
But not for the blossoms that gladdened and nour-
ished my soul.

The joy they awake may be truer thanksgiving,
Though wordless, accepted by Him who did say:
"Man by the bread alone shall not be living,"
And bid us behold the fair lilies that grow by the
way.

BUTTERFLIES

I sit on my porch the long after-noon,
And dream, and dream, and dream;
And the butterflies hover across the lawn,
In shadow and golden beam,
From flower to flower they flutter and fly,
The sweet of their beauty to find,
And out of my dream I wake with a cry:
"Ah, thus is my unquiet mind!"

For the chalice of life has few sweets for me,
But mostly some bitter thing,
The flowers which I planted with youthful glee,
So often their poison bring,
And the dreams that I dream are of things that
are past,
With remorse for their follies and hopes,
That the few joys of life so briefly do last,
And the noon-day so rapidly slopes.

Yet, the butterflies dance for a time without care,
And why should I murmur and fret,
While the summer is here, and all nature is fair,
And gleams mid the shadows are set?
I'll banish remorse and the sorrow which slays,
And dance with the butterflies gay,
And dream little less, and enter the ways
Of things which remain for a day.

THE ROSEBUSH

Against a quivering, golden beam,
Where dance a myriad winged things,
A rosebush stands, entranced in a dream,
While one gay thrush in the elm-tree sings,
It sends from wealth of a perfume sweet
An offering up to the happy bard,
Whose flood of melody flows to meet
The floating essence of wild-rose nard.

The flush of pink amid shades of green,
Is like a wreath for a June-day bride,
Its crown is decked with a lustrous sheen,
Yet it has gloom where the fairies hide,
For this is midsummer's perfect eve,
When minds are roving on fancy's wing,
When hearts are young and all things believe,
And childhood's gladness from long since bring.

A rare creation, a gift divine,
This rosebush is in my garden nook,
Whose beauty all of the sacred Nine
Would fancy more than the wisest book,
For not a poet in any age
Did joyful loveliness e'er express
Like that which lolls round the unseen mage,
So perfect, charming, and effortless.

It stands apart from the world of woe,
An yet has balm for the troubled mind,
An holy altar where one may know
The joy of beauty, and solace find,
Since God is there as in days of old,

When Moses heard Him 'mid flaming thorn,
(For I have always in secret held,
That bush had also its roses borne.)

From crowds pretentious and gibbering,
I turn oppressed to this holy place,
Instead of clamor, the thrushes sing,
Instead of crudeness, the perfect grace;
My soul is free, as I bend to kiss
The smiling rose, whose enchanting breath
Fills all my being with such a bliss,
That I could wish it the sting of death.

TWO ASPECTS

There's a golden light on one side of the tree,
On the other there is a shadow,
The shadowy side goes out to me,
The other runs down to the meadow,
And the light is beckoning me away
To the leas and fields of new-mown hay,
Beckoning out from the shadow.

There's a shadowyness on one side of the tree,
On the other a golden light,
And the shadowy side is inviting me
To rest in its sweet delight,
For the porches are wide, and the ladies are fair,
And the heat of the sun is not striking there,—
And I stand at the tree in a plight.

THE GREAT "I AM"

Thou art, and there is nought besides Thee!
Man's myriad errors in thought and striving,
Seen and unseen, are not of Thee!
They are not,—
But self-eliminating,—
Since Thou alone art Truth and Love.

What is of man's finiteness
Is nothing in Thy Everlastingness;—
He only is; That only is,
Which is a part of Thee in mind or matter!

THE DEATH CHANT

I heard a chant and a wailing,
Among the wooded hills,
From an Indian hut where they carried away
A man from his earthly ills.

The black-garbed women were chanting
The weirdest song I have heard—
An Indian lamentation,
Till nature itself seemed stirred.

And my heart was filled with pity,
As I saw that band forlorn,
Its poverty and sorrow—
On that bright September morn.

And I thought of their ancient story,
When the country was all their own,

And they dwelt 'mid its unshorn glory—
A splendor to us unknown—

The glory of forest and prairie,
A-teeming with herds and game,
And the rivers and streams and glittering lakes—
For food but another name.

When they were lords of the realms they surveyed,
And lived to their heart's content,
Till the white man came and robbed them
Of all but their rotting tent.

And the chiefs sat down in the ashes
Mid the hearth-stones of the past,
And a race of pride and adventure
Stood round with eyes downcast.

And the songs of the chase and the battle,
And the ballads of joy were hushed—
But the death-chant is still remembered,
By hearts that are sad and crushed.

And it seemed like the wail of a people
Whose sun upon earth has set—
The chant of the weeping women,
And the men to burial met.

THE LETTER

I wrote a letter from my heart,
Aglow with pain and passion,
In angry words and sudden start
Of pity and compassion.

The thing was done in utmost haste,
The pen inclined to caper,
I count it now an awful waste
Of rather decent paper.

And when the thing, I had achieved,
Was folded in my pocket,
My soul felt wondrously relieved,
Spent, like a fiery rocket.

When I did think of sending it,
I made a vague decision,
That it should wait a little bit,
Ere going on its mission.

It waited one, it waited two
And three days for the mailing,
And on the fourth myself did go
Where it was sure of failing.

Upon our journey did we cross
A stream of gentle flowing,
Where I impulsively did toss,
Against the breezes blowing,—

The letter torn to smithereens,
Like snowflakes slow descending,
Received by lambent hyalines
And current gaily wending.

Thus on the river's peaceful breast
My words of pain were carried,
Some swiftly with the stream's unrest,
And some did longer tarry.

And to the sea may be they sailed,
Where ocean swells are moaning,
Where life's great agony is wailed
Mid nature's endless groaning.

Though nought is lost, yet it is well
To let the fiery letter
Find such a fate, for it will quell
Things that destroy the better.

And this advice I freely give:
Write down your spirit's frowning,
For three days let it lonely live,
Then kill it all by drowning.

GOD'S TRUTH-TELLER

The poet is no liar. No!
Though truth may not be told
By him, just so, and so,—
By weight, and measure, or the cold
And soulless numbers —
By facts, so called, that cloy and cumber
The Psyche in its flight
Into that heavenly light
Of things, which children know,—
And poets see and feel
In beauty, which is truth,
Whose life-inspiring glow
Sometimes doth steal
Upon him, as does love upon the youth,
And moves his heart to song—
The music of his being,
Whose notes are pure and strong,

While he is seeing
God's Seraphims, and all
The earth replete with glory,—
And hears the call
From ages hoary
To his own day, and times to be—
The voice of God;
Truth-teller he,
Despite the rod
Of proud custodians
Of labelled "scientific facts" sans
Poetry,—
Before whom he refuses to bend knee;—
Truth-teller he, because to him was given
The vision to behold—the glory-trail of heaven,
In little things and great,
In life, and death, and destiny, and fate.

THE DEATH OF THE POET

(Suggested by Gottschalk's composition, "The Dying Poet.")

Life's checkered dream is over,
Ended its joys and woes;
Silent the bard and the lover
Down to the valley goes;
Down to the dark, broad river
Wanders his restless soul,
Into the vast Forever,
Which he so oft heard call,—
Ever, forever,
Singing through each and all.

Over him spirits hover,
Spirits who knew his life,
Knew all that holy power—
Wasted in grief and strife,—
Knew how he gave, not heeding
Sordidness, greed and sin,
Knew how his heart was bleeding,
Only the true to win,—
Ever, forever,
Living within.

Music too vast for language,
Bursting the bonds and bounds,
Now shall be free from anguish,
Free from discordant sounds,
Finding what here it never
Reached in its noblest fight,
The cadence of life's forever,
The glory of deathless light,—
Ever, forever,
Leading him through the night.

Pale now the brow of the singer,
Undecked by laurel-wreath,
Only a few friends linger,
To whom he his songs bequeathed;
But a host is waiting yonder,
Whose praise on his ears doth burst,
And the soul, who does lonely wander,
Shall quench its immortal thirst,—
Ever, forever,
And the things that are last shall be first.

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT

The snow was new, and soft, and deep,
The forest far away from me,
And yet how could I Christmas keep
Without a perfect Christmas tree?

So I set out, a boy of twelve,
With sled in hand to reach the pines,
And through the snow made for myself
A track amid most wild confines.

Beneath the lofty trees there stood
Full many a little evergreen,
And all were straight, and seemed quite good,
But not a perfect one was seen.

I waded on from tree to tree,
And thought, at times my choice I'd found,
But lo, it lacked true symmetry,
True symmetry from top to ground.

And thus the afternoon was spent,
Until the evening-shadows fell,
My axe, at last, was deftly sent
Into a spruce, each stroke did tell

Its fate through all the silent wood,
On echoes distant, echoes near,
Which seemed to say in mocking mood:
"The perfect one is here—is here!"

My ardor for the perfect one
Subsided as I strapped my prize,

Half of my strength was also gone,
And easy was the compromise.

My basking in the new-fall'n snow
Had drenched me and brought on a chill,
The homeward journey, long and slow,
Sent me to bed severely ill.

Long was I racked with fever's fire,
My life was like a flick'ring light,
They thought its last gleam would expire
Amid the storm of New Year's night.

Thus did I almost pay full score
For that my first and youthful quest
For perfectness, and evermore
I've found this is her stern behest:

Who would find me must give his all,
And even then may sorely fail,
But it adds glory to the soul
To walk in the Immortal's trail.

THE CHRISTMAS CACTUS

Born on the desert's sandy plain,
Born among thorns and heat and pain,
Brought to my home, amid cold and snow,
Unfolding blossoms of blood-drop glory,
Telling in symbol the Christ-child story,
And the way that He still must go.

For tokens of joy in a world of woe,
'Mid sorrow and loneliness often grow,

The word of truth and the song's clear strain,
That warms the heart when the earth is frozen,
The Lord of life has nourished and chosen
In deserts of thorns and pain.

But the beauty and joy of my Cactus flower
Has sweetest meaning at that great hour,
When the church-bells ring on Christmas eve,
Then its crimson seems with a wonder glowing,
And from its petals a love is flowing,
Which none but Christ can give.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT

Night, and a lonely star,
Night, with its deep repose,
A gleam of light from afar—
To souls oppressed with woes.

Light of the Bethlehem-star
On the inn and the shepherd-cotes,
That breaks o'er the golden bar,
Whence the angel-anthem floats.

Song of peace upon earth,
Peace which to heaven has fled,
But shall find its second birth,
Where the blood of millions is shed.

“Peace and good will to men!”
Verily 'tis His voice,
Bidding us trust again,
Yea, even in hope to rejoice.

Let us follow the guiding ray,
Let us go to the manger and see
The things which the angel did say,
The things that must surely be.

And our doubts and our fears shall cease,
As we enter the holy place,
Where dwelleth the Prince of Peace,
The Christ-child of love and grace.

Like children we there will bend
Ourselves in true adoration,
And humbly in worship blend
With every people and nation.

And sing with the unseen choir:
"A Saviour to us is born!"
Till kindles the heavenly fire
In our hearts on Christmas morn.

A NEW YEAR'S INVOCATION, 1918

Lord in this hour of tempest dread,
Be Thou our stay!
While boisterous billows lift their head
Upon our way;
While angry clouds the sun obscure,
Be Thou our light!
And give us courage to endure
The night!

Deliver us from coward's fear,
And craven's wish for pleasure.

Help us defend what is most dear,
With love's full measure,—
The Liberty our fathers won
Through storm and bloody fray,
The Liberty of Washington,
Of Lincoln, and of Clay!

Grant us to guard this heritage
For all mankind,
That when the world shall cease to rage,
It here may find
The gift of Heaven, beyond all price,
To show the way,
That through this awful sacrifice
May dawn a better day!

We know not what the year will bring
Of loss and sorrow;
But help us Thou in faith to sing
Of every morrow
As that of hope and victory,
And larger meed,
With trust that Thou wilt ever be
Our help in need!

Thus we will breast the darkest storm,
Since not alone,
And confident, Thou wilt perform,
At last enthrone,
Thy righteous acts among all men,
And tyrants overthrow;
Grant that this year's recording pen
Such victories may know! Amen.

EASTER

Our souls have need of Easter—
 Of resurrection light,
For never times were trister,
 Nor darker seemed the night.

Our souls have need of Easter
 With sunrise on the tomb,
For Mary has many a sister
 Who weeps within the gloom.

Our souls have need of Easter,
 Its lily pure and sweet,
As when the day-dawn kissed her
 Before the Saviour's feet.

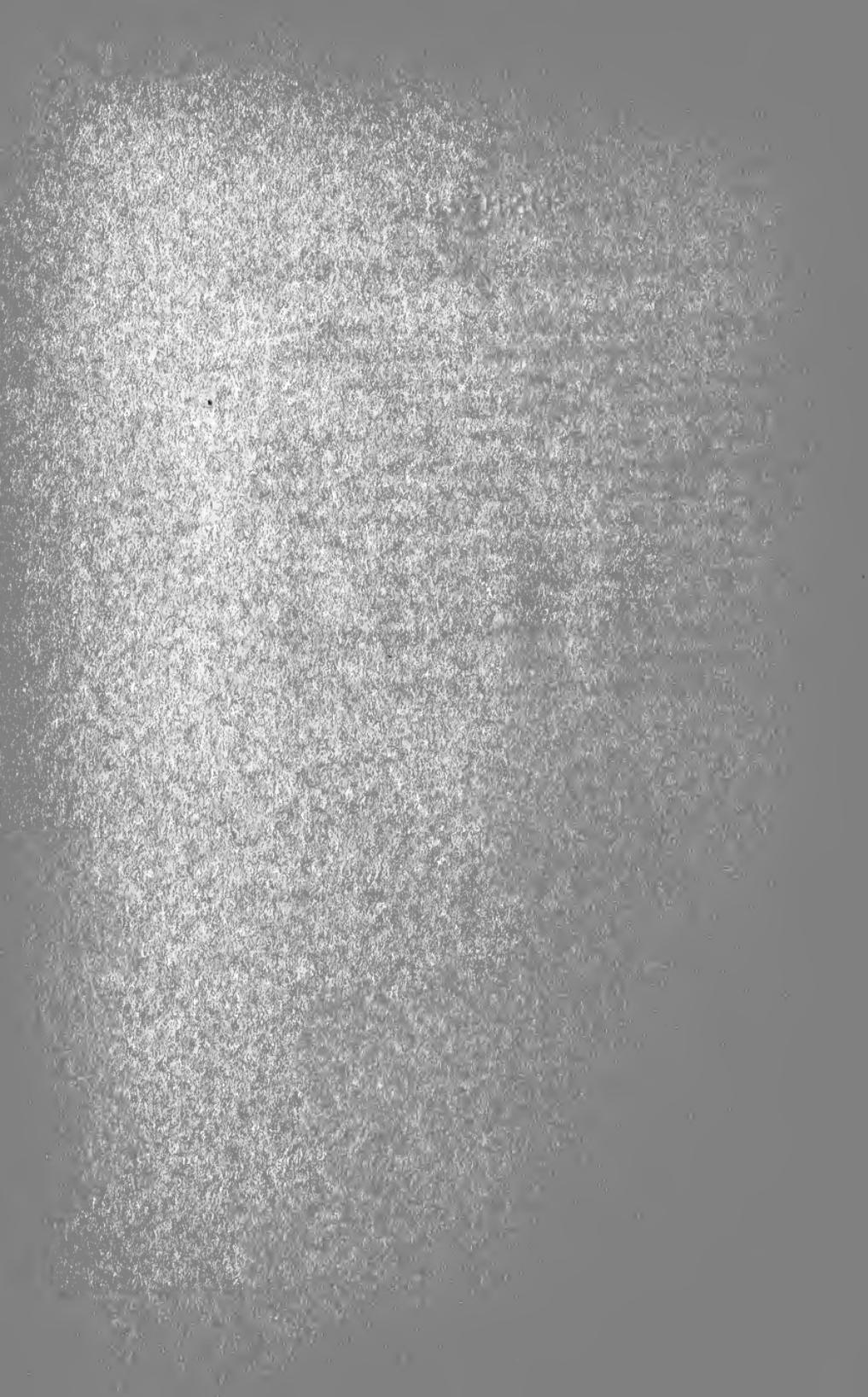
Our souls have need of Easter,
 With angel heraldry,
Which breaks the base and bister
 Seal of the Pharisee.

Our souls have need of Easter,
 With faith more glad and strong,
To be the firm resister
 Of untruth and the wrong.

Our souls have need of Easter,
 Which scatter's arméd foe,
Whose bloody spears still glister
 Where midnight watch-fires glow.

Our souls have need of Easter,
 With gleams of victory
O'er powers dark and sinister,
 And cruel tyranny.

SONNETS



LUX EX ORIENTE

(Inscription on Haskal hall, University of Chicago)

A feeble light of mummy-cloth and bones,
From crumbling coffins and the broken tombs,
From hieroglyphic mysteries on stones,
Removed from pyramidal catacombs,
Or sacred rock-hewn shrines where silence, and
Dark night have reigned five thousand years,—
A flick'ring flame, hid 'neath the desert sand,
And now revived, until its brightness clears
The gloom of history, thanks to the toil
Of sages who are following its gleam
Into the hoary past, and there the oil
Of wisdom find which turns the agelong dream
Of resurrection to reality,
And Egypt from Oblivion sets free.

ON THE STATUE OF VOLTAIRE

(In the Art Institute, Chicago)

He looks upon the daily passing throng,
As in his day he gazed upon the world,
With cynic smile while it did pass along
With standards of its varied creeds unfurled ;
Upon his forehead, reason's citadel,
His searching thoughts have left their runic stamp ;
The meager hands and neck the story tell,
How frail the temple of his spirit's lamp ;
In classic robe and fillet does he sit,
The poet-critic of France' golden age,
By whom the torch of liberty was lit,
In truth and beauty on the written page ;—
And work and freedom in this sage did find
Their true apostle to all humankind.

A VENETIAN WELL-HEAD (XV CENTURY)

(In the Gothic room of the Minneapolis Art Institute)

When I behold these grooves, cut in the edge
Of Istrian marble by the bucket-ropes,
Thy ancient history its romance opes
From Zorzi palace garden and its hedge:
I see the dark-eyed maidens, near the ledge,
And plumed signors feeding ardent hopes
From glances darting o'er thy watery slopes:
Or hear the lovers whisper soft their pledge,
As deep and pure as was thy cooling drink,—
The fount of life, the elixir of youth,
The well-spring of Venetian art and song,
When truth was beauty and all beauty truth;—
Even now thy charms can make the weary strong,
While pausing at thy side to dream and think.

THE PROSPECT

A youth lay stretched upon the new-mown hay,
In woodland meadow, near a winding stream,
And gazed at summer-clouds so far away,
And who can tell the substance of his dream?—
A span of horses and a rusty rake
Stood near him, where his father made repair,—
The ground was rough, and things did sometimes
 break,
And added trouble to the toiler's care;—
At last the rake was fixed, the boy arose
To take his place upon its iron-stool,
And doing so, he said: “Do you suppose
That I can go away, this fall, to school?”
To which his father answered: “We will see,—
If you work hard, till snow flies, it may be.”

THE HARVEST

The perfect, all resplendent moon looks down,
From cloudless realms of blue, upon a scene
Most marvellous,—Earth in her harvest-gown,—
A golden garment, hemmed by darkish green,
Moved by the wandering winds that drink the
sweet

Of new-mown clover-fields and tasselled corn;
The sound thereof is as when lovers meet,
And whisper gladness out of hearts love-lorn;—
Her royal robe, to which the world is clinging,
On which the moon and sun smile with delight,
Of which all nature's minstrels now are singing
In varied melodies, by day and night,—
Earth's great achievement, loveliest and best,
The golden harvest of the Middle West.

THE REWARD OF EPIMENIDES

When Solon gave to Athens laws, and sought
To cleanse it from pollutions and the crimes
Which dire disasters from the gods had brought,
He called a prophet from the purer clime,
Of sunny Crete, great Epimenides,
The wise, the nymph-begotten, whose long sleep
Had let him into nature's mysteries,
And things that are for common minds too deep:
He came, and did the work of bard and priest,
That Solon's code might shine clear as the sun.
And what reward?—The people hardly wist
But offered riches for the service done.
“An olive branch is all I ask,” he said;
That branch is green, though Athen's glory's dead.

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The lost chimes,



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